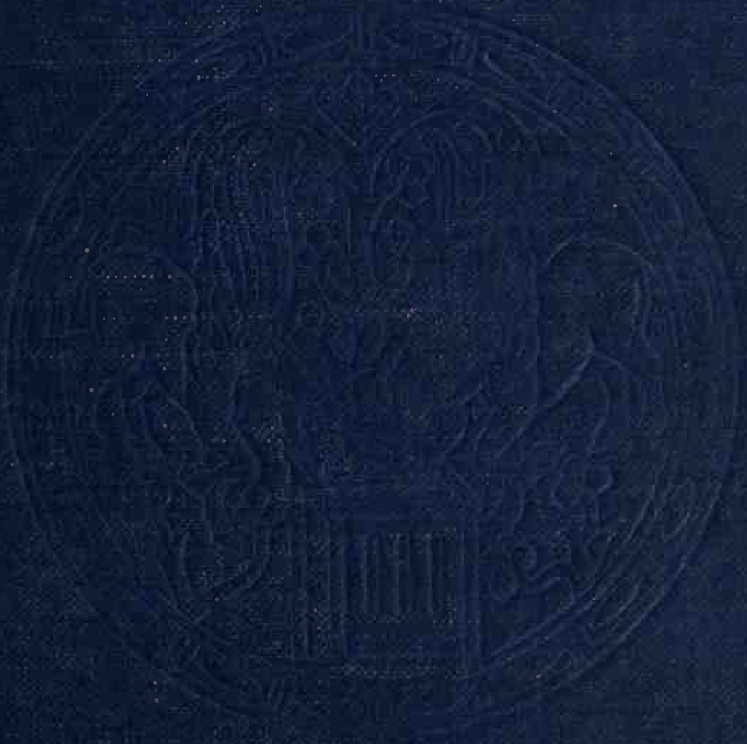

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(FOURTH REVISED EDITION)

BOOKS BY LOUIS UNTERMEYER

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ROAST LEVIATHAN
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A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY

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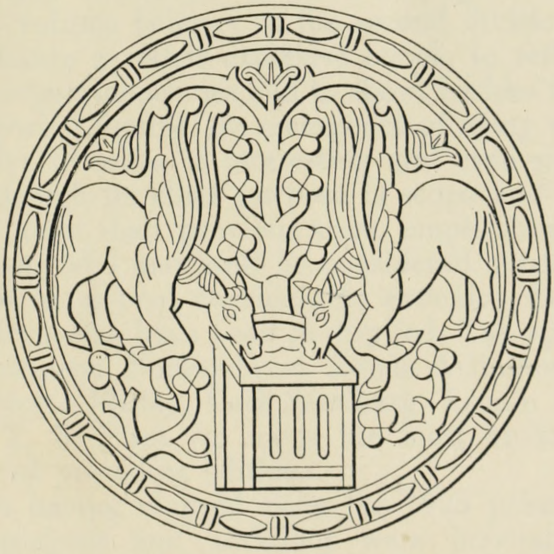

FOURTH REVISED EDITION

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NEW YORK

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A FOREWORD

To the Fourth Revised Edition

Although there are countless collections of verse, there are only two types of anthologies. The one limits itself to the work of fifteen or twenty poets of a given period; the other, presuming to present the period itself, does not confine itself to the obvious names. The former is exclusive, the latter inclusive. The first, concentrated and particular, has the advantage of presenting more detailed study; the second, emphasizing range and difference, has the advantage of a panoramic survey. This volume belongs to the second division in its endeavor to picture a rather extensive epoch, to reflect the rise and fall of certain tendencies and to show, besides the presence of a few imposing figures, the emergence of many whose work, not impressive in mass, is interesting and even significant in detail. But though its chief purpose is scope and variety, the new edition more than previous ones, emphasizes the fifteen or twenty poets who may well be considered outstanding. Not only have the notes been considerably extended, but the pages given to their poems have been multiplied. The space devoted to Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Carl Sandburg, Léonie Adams, Elinor Wylie, T. S. Eliot (to name the most obvious) almost doubles that of preceding editions.

Five years having elapsed since the 1925 printing, corrections, re-appraisals and additions were inevitable. Certain poets—Robinson Jeffers, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Merrill Moore, Malcolm Cowley, Langston Hughes, Phelps Putnam, Robert Penn Warren, among others—are represented in these pages for the first time although some of them appeared in a preparatory textbook (*Modern American and British Poetry*) issued by the editor in 1928.

Yet, in spite of its inclusiveness, this collection is likely to offend many because of its omissions. This cannot be helped, nor could it be avoided even in a work of encyclopedic proportions. Concerning himself for the moment with living poets (and this volume is principally occupied with contemporary poetry), the reader may gain some idea of the quantity of verse produced in the United States when he learns that, during the past decade, there was an annual average of five hundred volumes of poetry and drama. Besides this flood of actual books, there were at various times since 1912, more than thirty magazines devoted exclusively to the publishing of verse. Though the death-rate among these gallant *ephemerae* was rather high, there were no less than fourteen poetry magazines appearing in 1924, among which any critic of the recent renaissance will have to consider the veteran *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (the first in the field), *The Measure,* which was to New York what Miss Monroe's monthly was to Chicago, *The Fugitive,* that sharper, more individualized organ of a group of young Southerners. Nor is this all. There is scarcely a general magazine published today that does not allot a generous portion of its pages to the poems of a surprisingly lyrical generation. The reader will realize, therefore, that were this volume to be expanded into a set twice the size of Mr. Braithwaite's hardy annual Anthologies of Magazine Verse, there would still be many a county outraged to find its own sweet singer among the missing. In the end every editor is driven back upon that mixture of prejudice, preference and intuition known as personal taste—and there seems no way of escaping the limitations imposed by one's temperament.

Fortunately, one can be more definite in regard to the other features of the volume. To begin with, there is the matter of arrangement. It might have been entertaining to divide the contents into distinct groups and schools. Unfortunately, such a scheme would have given impressions as false as they would have been contradictory. One should not ticket contemporary writers with conclusive labels, especially since so many of them are still developing. One cannot give a true picture of a period in the state of flux except by showing its fluid character. It has been the editor's aim to reflect this flux and diversity.

Something has already been said concerning the inclusions, as well as the omissions. There are one or two amplifications to be added. Firstly, the fact that a poem has appeared in anthologies other than this one has not prejudiced me against it. A good poem remains a good poem, no matter how often it is reprinted. On the other hand, it should be admitted that where the choice has been between a much-quoted poem and one which has not been handed on from one anthologist to another, I have—where both poems were equally worthy—favored the less familiar example. Secondly, since this is a collection which attempts to chart a period, I have included various examples of those who have been dismissed as "mere experimenters," believing that experimentation is as vital a process of creation—and surely as significant a part of this age—as the unvarying acceptance of tradition. This same spirit has also impelled me to go to the other extreme—to reprint a small portion of that species which lies between light verse and authentic poetry, believing again that no survey of the period, no matter how casual, would be complete without the negro dialect of Irwin Russell and Paul Laurence Dunbar, the Hoosier accents of James Whitcomb Riley, the light patter of Eugene Field, the metropolitan chuckles of Franklin P. Adams, the Italian-American patois of T. A. Daly. In this welter of broken syllables, we have fresh evidence that America has become a melting-pot in the poetic as well as the ethnic use of the term.

One thing remains to be said. Although the notes as well as the number of poems selected make the editor's preferences obvious, it should be added that he has attempted to make each poet's group representative. To accomplish this, not only the early but the most recent writing of the contemporaries appears here—some of it for the first time between covers. Wherever possible, the selections as well as the authors have been chronologically arranged; that is, the earlier work is placed at the beginning of each group, the later work following in approximately the order in which it was written. I am greatly indebted to most of the living poets, not only for invaluable data, but for their collaborative assistance: many of the following pages embody their choice of their own poems as well as the editor's preferences.

Finally, I am grateful to the many publishers who have, in every instance, displayed a generosity and coöperation without which the successive editions of this volume would not have been possible. This indebtedness is alphabetically acknowledged to the following firms, as holders of the copyrights:

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MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

PREFACE

THE CIVIL WAR—AND AFTER

The end of the Civil War marked the end of a literary epoch. The New England group, containing (if Poe and Whitman could be added) all the great names of the antebellum period, began to disintegrate. The poets had outsung themselves; it was a time of surrender and swan-songs. Unable to respond to the new forces of political nationalism and industrial reconstruction, the Brahmins (that famous group of intellectuals who had dominated literary America) withdrew into their libraries. Poets like Longfellow, Bryant, Taylor, turned their eyes away from the native scene, rhapsodized endlessly about Europe, echoed the "parlor poetry" of England, or left creative writing altogether and occupied themselves with translations. "They had been borne into an era in which they had no part," writes Fred Lewis Pattee (*A History of American Literature Since 1870*), "and they contented themselves with reechoings of the old music." For them poetry ceased to be a reflection of actuality, "an extension of experience." Within a single period of six years, from 1867 to 1872, there appeared Longfellow's *Divina Commedia*, C. E. Norton's *Vita Nuova*, T. W. Parsons' *Inferno*, William Cullen Bryant's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Bayard Taylor's *Faust*.

Suddenly the break came. America developed a national consciousness; the West discovered itself, and the East discovered the West. Grudgingly at first, the aristocratic leaders made way for a new expression; crude, jangling, vigorously democratic. The old order was changing with a vengeance. All the preceding writers—poets like Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, Holmes—were not only products of the New England colleges, but typically "Boston gentlemen of the early Renaissance." To them the new men must have seemed like a regiment recruited from the ranks of vulgarity. Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Bret Harte, John Hay, Joaquin Miller, Joel Chandler

Harris, James Whitcomb Riley—these were men who had graduated from the farm, the frontier, the mine, the pilothouse, the printer's shop! For a while, the movement seemed of little consequence; the impact of Whitman and the Westerners was averted. The poets of the transition, with a deliberate art, ignored the surge of a spontaneous national expression. They were even successful in holding it back. But it was gathering force.

THE "POST-MORTEM" PERIOD

The nineteenth century, up to its last quarter, had been a period of new vistas and revolts: a period of protest and iconoclasm—the era of Shelley and Byron, the prophets of "liberty, equality and fraternity." It left no immediate heirs. In England, its successors by default were the lesser Victorians. In America, the intensity and power of men like Emerson and Whittier gave way to the pale romanticism and polite banter of the transition, or what might be called the "post-mortem" poets. "Much of our poetry," Thoreau wrote, "has the very best manners, but no character." These interim lyrists were frankly the singers of an indefinite reaction, reminiscently digging among the bones of a long-dead past. They burrowed and borrowed, half archeologists, half artisans, impelled not so much by the need of creating poetry as by the desire to write it.

From 1866 to 1880 the United States was in a chaotic and frankly materialistic condition; it was full of political scandals, panics, frauds, malfeasance in high places. The moral fiber was flabby; the country was apathetic, corrupt and contented. As in all such periods of national unconcern, the artists turned from life altogether, preoccupying themselves with the by-products of art: with method and technique, with elaborate and artificial conceits, with facile ideas rather than fundamental ideals.

Bayard Taylor, Thomas Buchanan Read, Richard Henry Stoddard, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Thomas Bailey Aldrich—all of these authors, in an effort to escape a reality they could not express and did not even wish to understand, fled to a more congenial realm of fantasy. They took the easiest routes to a prim and academic Arcadia, to a cloying and devitalized Orient or a mildly sensuous, treacle-dripping Greece. Their verse, confessing its own defeat, was cluttered with silk divans, Astrakhans, Vesuvian Bays, burning deserts, Assyrian temples, Spanish cloths of gold. Originality was as far from their thoughts as thinking itself; they followed wherever Keats, Shelley (in his lesser lyrics) and Tennyson seemed to lead them. However, not being explorers themselves, they ventured no further than their predecessors, but remained politely in the rear, repeating dulcetly what they had learned from their greater guides—pronouncing it with little variety but with a vast and sentimental unction. In their desperate preoccupation with lures and legends overseas, they were not, except for the accident of birth, American at all; all of them owed much more to old England than to New England.

WALT WHITMAN

Whitman, who was to influence future generations so profoundly in Europe as well as in America, had already appeared. The third edition of that stupendous volume, *Leaves of Grass,* had been printed in 1860. Almost immediately after, the publisher failed and the book passed out of public notice. But private scrutiny was keen. In 1865 a petty official discovered that Whitman was the author of the "notorious" *Leaves of Grass* and, in spite of his sacrifice in nursing hundreds of wounded soldiers, in spite of his many past services and his present poverty, the offending poet was dismissed from his clerkship in the Department of the Interior at Washington, D. C. Other reverses followed rapidly. But Whitman, broken in health and cheated by his exploiters, lived to see not only a seventh edition of his great work published in 1881, but a complete collection printed in his seventy-third year (1892) in which the twelve poems of the experimental first edition had grown to nearly four hundred.

The influence of Whitman can scarcely be overestimated. It has touched every shore of letters, quickened every current of contemporary art. And yet, as late as 1900, Barrett Wendell in his *Literary History of America* could speak of Whitman's "eccentric insolence of phrase and temper," and, perturbed by the poet's increasing vogue across the Atlantic (Whitman had been hailed by men as eminent as Swinburne, Symonds, Rossetti), he was led to write such a preposterous sentence as

"In temperament and style he was an exotic member of that sterile brotherhood which eagerly greeted him abroad."

Such a judgment would be impossible today. Whitman has been acclaimed by a great and growing public, not only here but in England, Germany, Russia, Italy and France. He has been hailed as prophet, as pioneer, as rebel, as fiery humanist and, most frequently, as liberator. He is, in spite of the rhetorical flourish, the Lincoln of our literature. The whole scheme of *Leaves of Grass* is inclusive rather than exclusive; its form is elemental, dynamic, free.

Nor was it only in the relatively minor matter of form that Whitman became our great poetic emancipator. He led the way toward a wider aspect of democracy; he took his readers out of fusty, lamp-lit libraries into the coarse sunlight and the buoyant air. He was, as Burroughs wrote, preëminently the poet of vista; his work had the power "to open doors and windows, to let down bars rather than to put them up, to dissolve forms, to escape narrow boundaries, to plant the reader on a hill rather than in a corner." He could do this because, first of all, he believed implicitly in life—in its physical as well as its spiritual manifestations; he sought to grasp existence as a whole, not rejecting the things that, to other minds, had seemed trivial or tawdry. The cosmic and the commonplace were synonymous to him; he declared he was part of elemental, primitive things and constantly identified himself with them.

> "What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest is Me."

And by "me" he meant any one. Whitman's entire work, which has so often been misunderstood as the outpourings of egotism, was never so much a celebration of himself as a glorification of the ordinary man.

It was this breadth, this jubilant acceptance, that made Whitman so keen a lover of casual and ordinary things; he was the first of our poets to reveal "the glory of the commonplace." He transmuted, by the intensity of his emotion, material which had been hitherto regarded as too unpoetic for poetry. His long poem "Song of Myself" is a magnificent example. Here his "barbaric yawp," sounded "over the roofs of the world," is softened, time and again, to express a lyric ecstasy and naïf wonder.

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre of the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow, crunching with depressed head, surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels!

It is this large naturalism, this affection for all that is homely and of the soil, that sets Whitman apart from his fellow craftsmen as our first American poet. This blend of familiarity and grandeur, this racy but religious mysticism animates all his work. It swings with tremendous vigor through "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"; it sharpens the sturdy rhythms (and occasional rhymes) of the "Song of the Broad-Axe"; it beats sonorously through "Drum-Taps"; it whispers immortally through the "Memories of President Lincoln" (particularly that magnificent threnody "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed"); it quickens the "Song of the Open Road" with what Tennyson called "the glory of going on," and lifts with a biblical solemnity "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

Whitman did not scorn the past; no one was quicker than he to see its wealth and glories. But most of the older flowerings belonged to their own era; they were foreign to our country—transplanted, they did not flourish on this soil. What was original with many transatlantic poets was being merely aped by facile and unoriginal bards in these States; they seemed bent on transforming poetry into a pedant's stroll through Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*. Concerned only with the myths of other and older countries, they were blind to the living legends of their own. In his "Song of the Exposition" Whitman wrote not only his own *credo*, but uttered the manifesto of the new generation—especially in these lines:

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia.
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts;
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings;
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus. . . .
For know that a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wider, untried domain awaits, demands you.

The final estimate of Whitman's work is yet to be written. Whitman's very universality defeated his commentators. To the craftsmen, Whitman's chief contribution was his form; hailing him as the father of the free verse movement, they placed their emphasis on his flexible sonority, his orchestral *timbre*, his tidal rhythms, his piling up of details into a symphonic structure. To the philosophers, he was the first of modern prophets; a rhapsodic mystic with a magnificently vulgar sense of democracy. To the psychologist, he was the most revealing of autobiographers; "whoever touches this book, touches a man," he wrote. To the lay reader, he was a protagonist of "the divine average"; celebrating himself—hearty, gross, noble, "sane and sensual to the core"—he celebrated humanity.

EMILY DICKINSON

Contemporary with Whitman, though, as far as the records show, utterly unaware of him, that strange phenomenon, Emily Dickinson, lived and wrote her emblematic poetry. Only four of the poems now famous were published during her lifetime; she cared nothing for a public, less for publicity. It was not until forty years after her death that she was recognized as one of the most original of American poets and, in some ways, the most remarkable woman poet since Sappho. Her centenary, occurring in the same year as Christina Rossetti's, was signaled by salvos of appreciation and the inevitable comparisons with the Englishwoman born five days earlier than her Amherst contemporary. Both poets were born in 1830; both were strongly influenced by their fathers. Both were, in spite of every difference, puritan "beyond the blood." Both made "the great abnegation"—one because she could not face marriage, one because the man she loved was married and she could face misery without him better than social tragedy with him. Here the personal similarities end. The poetic likenesses are more remote. True, both poets are linked by language, but even that tie cannot hold the two together long. They, themselves, would have been the first to repudiate the bond. Emily Dickinson would have been impatient with the round rhetoric of Christina Rossetti; much that the American wrote would have seemed reprehensible and, oftener than not, incomprehensible to the Englishwoman. As Christina grew older, her verse grew thinner and more repetitive; moments of vision were expanded into ever-lengthening sententiousness. After Emily weathered the crisis, her verse grew continually tighter, her divinations condensed until the few lines became telegraphic and these telegrams seemed not only self-addressed but written in code. Not that Christina lacked divination; in the magnificent "From Hearth to Home," in several of the austere sonnets, and in some fifteen lyrics she attained sheer illumination. What is more difficult, she communicated it. At her infrequent highest, Christina Rossetti breathed a clearer, calmer air than "the nun of Amherst." Hers was a cloistral faith, secure above time and a troubling universe. Rumor to the contrary, there was nothing nun-like about Emily Dickinson. If the episodes of her childhood (*vide* the *Life and Letters*) were not sufficient to prove it, the poetry is; the freedom of her spirit manifests itself in the audacity of her images, the wild leap of her epithets, the candor which extends from irreverent mischief to divine challenge. Sometimes elliptical, sometimes so concentrated as to be cryptic, hers is a poetry of continual surprise where metaphors turned to epigrams, epigrams to compact dramas, a poetry where playfulness and passion merged and were sublimated in pure thought.

Could any one have failed to recognize this revelation at the outset? One supposes a few tense quatrains, a dozen syllables must have been sufficient to reveal the definiteness of her genius. But "the authorities" contained either slighting references or none at all. As late as 1914 *The New International Encyclopaedia* dismissed her life and work in ten lines, concluding "In thought her introspective lyrics are striking but are deficient in form." *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* seemed still less aware of her existence until 1926; as late as this the thirteenth edition contained only a mention, a cross-reference by way of comparison; her name did not even appear in the Index. Yet her *Poems* (*First Series*) had appeared as early as 1890 and two subsequent collections had been published before 1896. In these volumes—as well as in *The Single Hound* (1915) and *Further Poems*, an amazing set of newly discovered verses published in 1929—Emily Dickinson anticipated not only her avowed disciples but a score of poets unaware of her influence. Quaintly, without propaganda, she fashioned her imagist etchings fifty years before Imagism became a slogan; her experiments in "slant" or "suspended" rhyme were far more radical than those of any exponent of assonance; her ungrammatical directness was more spontaneous than the painful dislocations of "the new primitives."

The evidence of this anticipating modernity is everywhere, especially in *Further Poems.* Emily would have been the last to claim anything, particularly the claim of being a forerunner, yet "Death's large democratic fingers" might well have prompted E. E. Cummings. MacLeish's "*Ars Poetica*" startles us by its abstraction:

Poetry should not mean
But be—

and Emily, sometime in the '70s, concludes:

Beauty is not caused,
It is.

Hodgson tells us "God loves an idle rainbow no less than laboring seas" and that "Reason has moons, but moons not hers lie mirrored on the sea, confounding her astronomers but, Oh, delighting me." And Emily (who knows how many years earlier?) was saying:

The rainbow never tells me
That gust and storm are by,
Yet she is more convincing
Than all philosophy.

Not that she despised philosophy. On the contrary, in the midst of her cakes and puddings and ice-creams, the family breadmaker (for Emily gloried in her housewifery) would turn to consider Bishop Berkeley. Intricately but with a final clarity, she expressed herself on the paradox of discipline:

Experience is the angled road
Preferred against the mind
By paradox, the mind itself
Presuming it to lead
Quite opposite. How complicate
The discipline of man,
Compelling him to choose himself
His pre-appointed plan.

Thus, and continuously, Emily would jot down the notes for her uncoördinated autobiography. When that difficult work is synthesized, when some inspired arranger imposes an order on the eight hundred scattered poems,[1] the differing versions of many of the lines and the contradictions of her various editors will be resolved. As early as 1891, one of them (Mabel Loomis Todd) wrote: "To what further rigorous pruning her verses would have been subjected had she published them herself, we cannot know. They should be regarded in many cases as merely the first strong and suggestive sketches of an artist, intended to be embodied at some time in the finished picture." Her manner of writing made it equally hazardous for her editors, some of whom erred by too much editing, some by a too literal following of spacing, punctuation and obvious mistakes. "In most of her poems, particularly the later ones, everything by way of punctuation was discarded, except numerous dashes; and all important words began with capitals."

Thus Emily Dickinson became a puzzle. Much of her problem remains in the realm of the mysterious. She was like no other poet; her very "roughnesses" were individual. Time and again she skipped the expected rhyme, twisted the easy phrase, and put her indubitable mark on every line she wrote. Wholly underivative, her poetry was unique; her influence, negligible at first, is now incalculable.

THE AWAKENING OF THE WEST

By 1870 the public had been surfeited with sugared conceits and fine-spun delicacies. For almost twelve years, Whitman had stormed at the squeamish overrefinements of the period, but comparatively few had listened. Yet an instinctive distaste for the prevailing affectations had been growing, and when the West began to express itself in the raw accents of Mark Twain and Bret Harte, the people turned to them with enthusiasm and no little relief. Mark Twain, a frustrated prose Whitman, revealed the romantic Mississippi and the vast mid-West; Bret Harte, beginning a new American fiction in 1868, ushered in the wild humor and wilder poetry of California. It is still a question whether Bret Harte or John Hay first discovered the literary importance of Pike County narratives.

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[1] Josephine Pollitt, in *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background* (1930), declares there is evidence that the number of poems she wrote is *double* that of the eight hundred published by her editors.

Twain was positive that Hay was the pioneer; documentary evidence points to Harte. But it is indisputable that Harte developed—and even overdeveloped—the possibilities of his backgrounds, whereas Hay, after a few brilliant ballads, reverted to his early poetic ideals and turned to the production of studied, polished and undistinguished verse. Lacking the tremendous gusto of Mark Twain or even the native accuracy of Hay, Bret Harte perfected a terse, dramatic idiom. Less exuberant than his compeers, he became more skillful in making his situations "effective"; he popularized dialect, sharpening his outlines and intensifying the power of his prose. Harte's was an influence that found its echo in the Hoosier stories of Edward Eggleston and made so vivid an impress on nineteenth-century literature.

To the loose swagger of the West, two other men added their diverse contributions. Edward Rowland Sill, cut short just as his work was gaining headway and strength, brought to it a gentle radicalism, a calm and cultured honesty; Joaquin Miller, rushing to the other extreme, theatricalized and exaggerated all he touched. He shouted platitudes at the top of his voice. His lines boomed with the pomposity of a brass band; floods, fires, hurricanes, extravagantly blazing sunsets, Amazonian women, the thunder of a herd of buffaloes—all were unmercifully piled up. And yet, even in its most blatant *fortissimos,* Miller's poetry occasionally captured the grandeur of his surroundings, the spread of the Sierras, the lavish energy of the Western world.

Now that the leadership of letters had passed from the East, all parts of the country began to try their voices. The West continued to hold its rugged supremacy; the tradition of Harte and Hay was followed (softened and sentimentalized) by Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley. In the South, Irwin Russell was pioneering in negro dialect (1875), Sidney Lanier fashioned his intricate harmonies (1879), and Madison Cawein began to create his tropical and overluxuriant lyrics. A few years later (in 1888) Russell brought out his faithfully rendered *Dialect Poems* and the first phase of the American renascence had passed.

REACTION AND REVOLT IN THE '90S

The reaction set in at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century. The passionate urge had spent itself, and in its place there remained nothing but that minor form of art which concerns itself less with creation than with re-creation. These re-creators wrote verse that was precise, scholarly and patently reproductive of their literary loves. "In 1890," writes Percy H. Boynton, "the poetry-reading world was chiefly conscious of the passing of its leading singers for the last half-century. It was a period when they were recalling Emerson's 'Terminus' and Longfellow's 'Ultima Thule,' Whittier's 'A Lifetime,' Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar,' and Browning's 'Asolando.' " . . . The poetry of this period (whether it is the fine-chiseled verse of John B. Tabb or the ornate delicacy of Richard Watson Gilder) reflects a kind of moribund resignation; it is dead because it detached itself from the actual world, because it attempted to be a copied embellishment rather than an interpretation of life. But those who regarded poetry chiefly as a not too energetic indoor-exercise were not to rule unchallenged. Restlessness was in the air and revolt openly declared itself with the publication of *Songs from Vagabondia* (1894), *More Songs from Vagabondia* (1896) and *Last Songs from Vagabondia* (1900). No one could have been more surprised at the tremendous popularity of these care-free celebrations (the first of the three collections went through seven rapid editions) than the young authors, Richard Hovey and Bliss Carman. For theirs was a revolt without a program, a headlong flight to escape—what? In the very first poem, Hovey voices their manifesto:

> Off with the fetters
> That chafe and restrain!
> Off with the chain!
> Here Art and Letters,
> Music and Wine
> And Myrtle and Wanda,
> The winsome witches,
> Blithely combine.
> Here is Golconda,
> Here are the Indies,
> Here we are free—
> Free as the wind is,
> Free as the sea,
> Free!

Free for what? one asks doggedly. Hovey does not answer directly, but with unflagging buoyancy, whipped up by scorn for the smug ones, he continues:

I tell you that we,
While you are smirking
And lying and shirking
Life's duty of duties,
Honest sincerity,
We are in verity
Free!
Free to rejoice
In blisses and beauties!
Free as the voice
Of the wind as it passes!
Free . . . *etc.*

Free, one concludes, to dwell with Music and Wine, Myrtle and Wanda, Art and Letters. Free, in short, to follow, with a more athletic energy, the same ideals as the parlor-poets they gibed so relentlessly. But the new insurgence triumphed. It was the heartiness, the gypsy jollity, the rush of high spirits that conquered. Readers of the *Vagabondia* books were swept along by their speed faster than by their philosophy.

The enthusiastic acceptance of these new apostles of outdoor vigor was, however, not as much of an accident as it seemed. On one side (the world of art) the public was wearied by barren meditations set to tinkling music; on the other (the world of action) it was faced by a staggering growth of materialism which it feared. Hovey, Carman and their imitators offered a swift way out. But it was neither an effectual nor a permanent escape. The war with Spain, the industrial turmoil, the growth of social consciousness and new ideas of responsibility made America look for fresh valuations. Hovey began to go deeper into himself and his age; in the mid-West, William Vaughn Moody grappled with the problems of his times only to have his work cut short by death in 1910. But these two were exceptions; in the main, it was another interval—two decades of appraisal and expectancy, of pause and preparation.

INTERIM—1890-1912

This interval of about twenty years was notable for its effort to treat the spirit of the times with a cheerful evasiveness, a humorous unconcern; its most representative craftsmen were, with four exceptions, the writers of light verse. These four exceptions were Richard Hovey, Bliss Carman, William Vaughn Moody and Edwin Markham.

Moody's power was the greatest, although it never reached its potentialities. In "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," he protested against turning the "new-world victories into gain" and painted American idealism on an idealistic canvas. In "The Quarry" he celebrated America's part in preventing the breaking-up of China by the empires of Europe (an act accomplished by John Hay, poet and diplomat). In "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines," a dirge wrenched from the depths of his nature, Moody cried out against our own imperialists. It was the fulfillment of this earlier poem which found its climax in the lengthy Ode, with such lines as:

> Was it for this our fathers kept the law?
> This crown shall crown their struggle and their ruth?
> Are we the eagle nation Milton saw
> Mewing its mighty youth? . . .
> . . . O ye who lead
> Take heed!
> Blindness we may forgive, but baseness we will smite.

Early in 1899, the name of Edwin Markham flashed across the land when, out of San Francisco, rose the challenge of "The Man with the Hoe." This poem, which was once ecstatically called "the battle-cry of the next thousand years" (Joaquin Miller declared it contained "the whole Yosemite—the thunder, the might, the majesty"), caught up the passion for social justice that was waiting to be intensified in poetry. Markham summed up and spiritualized the unrest that was in the air; in the figure of one man with a hoe, he drew a picture of men in the mines, men in the sweatshop, men working without joy, without hope. To social consciousness he added social conscience. In a ringing if rhetorical blank verse, Markham crystallized the expression of outrage, the heated ferment of the period.

Inspiring as these examples were, they did not generate others of their kind; the field lay fallow for more than a decade. The lull was pronounced, the gathering storm remained inaudible.

RENASCENCE—1913

Suddenly the "new" poetry burst upon us with unexpected vigor and extraordinary variety. Moody and Markham were its immediate forerunners; Whitman its spiritual godfather. October, 1912, saw the first issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* a monthly that was to introduce the work of hitherto unknown poets, schools and "movements." The magazine came at the very moment before the breaking of the storm. Flashes and rumblings had already been troubling the literary heavens; a few months later came—the deluge! For three years the skies continued to discharge such strange and divergent phenomena as Vachel Lindsay's *General William Booth Enters into Heaven* (1913), James Oppenheim's *Songs for the New Age* (1914), the first anthology of *The Imagists* (1914), *Challenge* (1914), Amy Lowell's *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914), Lindsay's *The Congo and Other Poems* (1914), Robert Frost's *North of Boston* (1914), Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), John Gould Fletcher's *Irradiations* (1915), Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* (1916). By 1917, the "new" poetry was ranked as "America's first national art"; its success was sweeping, its sales unprecedented. People who never before had read verse, turned to it and found they could not only read but relish it. They discovered that for the enjoyment of poetry it was no longer necessary to have at their elbows a dictionary of rare words and classical references; they were not required to be acquainted with Latin legendry and the minor love-affairs of the lesser Greek divinities. Life was their glossary, not literature. The new work spoke to them in their own language. And it did more: it spoke to them of what they rarely had heard expressed; it was not only closer to their soil but nearer to their souls.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

One reason why the new poetry achieved so sudden a success was its freedom from the traditionally stilted "poetic diction." Revolting strongly against the assumption that poetry must have a vocabulary of its own, the poets of the new era spoke in the oldest and most stirring tongue; they used a language that was the language not of the poetasters but of the people.

In the tones of ordinary speech they rediscovered the strength, the dignity, the vital core of the commonplace.

Edwin Arlington Robinson had already been employing the sharp epithet, the direct and clarifying utterance which was to become part of our present technique. As early as 1897, in *The Children of the Night*, Robinson anticipated the brief characterizations and etched outlines of Masters' *Spoon River Anthology;* he stressed the psychological element with unerring artistry and sureness of touch. His sympathetic studies of men whose lives were, from a worldly standpoint, failures were a sharp reaction to the current high valuation on financial achievements, ruthless efficiency and success at any cost. Ahead of his period, he had to wait until 1916, when a public prepared for him by the awakened interest in native poetry discovered *The Man Against the Sky* (1916) and the richness of Robinson at the same time. After that, his audience increased steadily. His Arthurian legends replaced Tennyson's, *Tristram* (1927) attaining a greater sale than most successful novels. *Cavender's House* (1929), although a difficult and lengthy monologue, solidified his position; the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry was thrice awarded to him; and there was no longer any doubt as to the importance of his contribution to American literature.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Frost and Masters were the bright particular planets of 1915, although the star of the latter waned while the light of the former grew in magnitude. Yet Masters' most famous book will rank as a landmark. In it, he synthesized the small towns of the mid-West with a background unmistakably local and with implications that are universal. This amazing volume, in its curiosity and comprehensiveness, laid open a broad cross-section of whole communities. Beneath its surface tales and dramas, its condensation of grocery-store gossip, *Spoon River Anthology* was a great part of America in microcosm.

The success of the volume was sensational. It was actually one of the season's "best sellers"; in a few months, it went into edition after edition. Perhaps most readers passed over the larger issues (Masters' revelation of the sordid cheats and hypocrisies, his arraignment of dirty politics and dirtier chicanery) intent on seeing their neighbors pitilessly exposed. Yet had Masters dwelt only on the drab disillusion of the village, had he (as he was constantly in danger of doing) overemphasized the morbid and sensual episodes, he would have left only a spectacular and poorly balanced work. But the book ascends to a definite exaltation and ends on a plane of half-victorious idealism. Indigenous to its roots, it is stark, unflinching, unforgettable.

ROBERT FROST

The same year that brought forth *Spoon River Anthology* saw the American edition of Frost's *North of Boston.* It was evident at once that the true poet of New England had arrived. Unlike his predecessors, Frost was never a poetic provincial—never parochial in the sense of America still being a literary parish of England. Frost was as native as the lonely farmhouses, the dusty blueberries, the isolated people, the dried-up brooks and mountain intervals that he described. Loving, above everything else, the beauty of the Fact, he shared, with Robinson and Masters, the determination to tell not merely the actual but the factual truth. But Frost, a less disillusioned though a more saddened poet, wore his rue and his realism with a difference. Where Robinson was definite, Frost diverged, going roundabout and, in his speculative wandering, covering a wider territory of thought. Where Masters was violent and hotly scornful, Frost was reticent and quietly sympathetic. Again where Masters, viewing the mêlée above the struggle, wrote *about* his characters, Frost was *of* his people. Where Robinson, in his more racy and reminiscent moods, often reflected New England, Frost *was* New England.

North of Boston was well described by the poet's own subtitle: "a book of people." In it one not only sees a countryside of people living out the intricate pattern of their lives, one catches them thinking out loud, one can hear the very tones of their voices. Here we have speech so arranged and translated that the speaker is heard on the printed page; any reader will be led by the kind and color of these words into reproducing the changing accents in which they are supposed to be uttered. It is this insistence that "all poetry is the reproduction of the tones of actual speech" which gives these poems, as well as the later lyrics, a quickly communicated emotional appeal. It endows them with the deepest power of which words are capable—the power to transmit significant sounds. These sounds, let in from the vernacular, are full of a robust, creative energy; they are compacted of the blood and bones of the people they speak for.

But Frost was by no means the dark naturalist that many suspected. Behind the mask of "grimness" which many critics fastened upon him, there is a continual elfin pucker; a whimsical smile, a half-disclosed raillery glints beneath his most somber monologues. The later *New Hampshire* (1923) and *West-Running Brook* (1928) proved his "other side"; Frost's lyrics are no less personal for being philosophical. Now it is obvious how Vergilian a spirit animated a passionate Puritan; Frost's concrete facts are symbols of spiritual values. Through his very reticence as well as through his revelations one hears much more than the voice of New England.

CARL SANDBURG

Just so, the great mid-West, that vast region of steel mills and slaughter-houses, of cornfields and prairies, of crowded cities and empty skies, spoke through Carl Sandburg. In Sandburg, industrial America found its voice: *Chicago Poems* (1916), *Cornhuskers* (1918), *Smoke and Steel* (1920) vibrate with the immense purring of dynamos, the rhythms of threshing arms, the gossip and laughter of construction gangs, the gigantic and tireless energy of the machine. Frankly indebted to Whitman, Sandburg's poems were less sweeping but more varied; musically his lines marked a great advance. He sounded the extremes of the gamut; there are few poems in our language more violent than "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter," few lyrics as hushed and tender as "Cool Tombs."

Like Frost, Sandburg was true to *things*. But Frost was content with the inexhaustible fact and its spiritual implications; he never hoped to drain it all. Sandburg also fed on the fact, but it did not satisfy him. He had strange hungers; he hunted eagerly for the question behind, the answer beyond. The actual scene, to him, was a point of vivid and abrupt departure. Reality, far from being the earth on which he dwelt, was, for Sandburg, the ground he touched before rising; realism acted merely as a springboard from which this poet dove into a romantic mysticism. His later work, in fact, was almost too full of gnomic gestures.

When *Chicago Poems* first appeared, it was received with a disfavor ranging from hesitant patronization to the scornful jeers of the academicians. Sandburg was accused of verbal anarchy; of a failure to distinguish prose matter from poetic material; of uncouthness, vulgarity, assaults on the English language and a score of other crimes. In the face of those who even in *Good Morning, America* (1928) still see only a coarseness and distorted veritism in Sandburg, it cannot be said too often that he is brutal only when dealing with brutal things; that his "vulgarity" springs from love of life as a whole, not from affection for a drab or decorative part of it; that his bitterest invectives are the result of a disgust of shams. The strength of his hatred is exceeded by the challenge of his love.

THE IMAGISTS AND AMY LOWELL

Sandburg established himself as the most daring user of American words—rude words ranging from the racy metaphors of the soil to the slang of the street. But long before this, the possibilities of a new vocabulary were being tested. As early as 1865, Whitman was saying, "We must have new words, new potentialities of speech—an American range of self-expression. . . . The new times, the new people need a tongue according, yes, and what is more, they will have such a tongue—will not be satisfied until it is evolved."

It is curious to think that one of the most effective agents to fulfill Whitman's prophecy and free modern poetry from a self-imposed diction was that little band of preoccupied specialists, the Imagists. They were, for all their preciosity and occasional extravagances, liberators in the sense that their programs, pronouncements and propaganda compelled their most dogged adversaries to acknowledge the integrity of their aims. Their restatement of old truths was one of the things which helped the new poetry out of a bog of rhetorical rubbish.

Ezra Pound was the first to gather the insurgents into a definite group. During the winter of 1913, he collected a number of poems illustrating the Imagist point of view, conceiving Imagism as a discriminating term like "lyricism," and had them printed in a volume: *Des Imagistes* (1914). A little later Pound withdrew from the clan. The rather queerly assorted group began to disintegrate and Amy Lowell, then in England, brought some of the younger members together in three yearly anthologies (*Some Imagist Poets*) which appeared in 1915, 1916 and 1917. There were, in Miss Lowell's new grouping, three Englishmen (D. H. Lawrence, Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint), three Americans (H. D., John Gould Fletcher, Amy Lowell), and their creed, summed up in six statements,[1] was as follows:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. . . . We do believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms.
3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject.
4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous.
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is the very essence of poetry.

It does not seem possible that these six obvious and almost platitudinous principles (which, incidentally, the Imagists often neglected in their poetry) could have evoked the storm of argument, fury and downright vilification that broke as soon as the militant Miss Lowell began to champion them. Far from being revolutionary, these principles were not new; they were not even thought so by their sponsors. The Imagists themselves realized that they were restating ideals which had fallen into desuetude, and declared, "They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature." And yet many conservative critics, joined by the one hundred per cent reactionaries, rushed wildly to combat these "heresies"! They forgot that, in trying to protect the future from such lawlessness as "using the exact word," from "freedom in the choice of subject," from the importance of "concentration," they were actually attacking the highest traditions of their enshrined past.

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[1] The injunction to "use no word which does not contribute to the presentation"—a Spartan injunction originating with Pound—seems to have been forgotten by Miss Lowell's "Amygists."

The fracas succeeded in doing more good than the work of the Imagists themselves. H. D. removed herself from controversies and took up her residence in Switzerland, perfecting her delicate and exquisitely finished designs. John Gould Fletcher, a more vacillating expatriate, remained in London and continued to strengthen his gift though shifting his standards; his later and richer work was in complete opposition to the early pronouncements. Miss Lowell was left to carry on the battle single-handed; to defend the theories which, in practice, she was beginning to violate brilliantly. A most energetic and unflagging experimenter, the late Miss Lowell was amazing in her versatility. She wielded a controversial cudgel with one hand and, with the other, wrote Chaucerian stanzas, polyphonic prose, monologs in New England dialect, irregular *vers libre,* conservative couplets, myths from the Peruvian, translations from the French, echoes from the Japanese, re-creations of Indian folk-lore!

The work of the Imagists was done. Its members began to develop themselves by themselves. They had helped to swell the tide of realistic and romantic naturalism—a tide of which their contribution was merely one wave, a breaker that carried its impact far inshore.

THE FREE VERSE FURORE

One of the tenets of the Imagists (the belief that the individuality of a poet may often be expressed better in free verse than in conventional forms) spread further than all the other articles of their faith. The ease of its fulfillment more than its apparent truth led hundreds who were not, in any sense, Imagist poets to adopt *vers libre* as their medium. The result was an inundation of footless—and often headless—writing; the little which was incisive and original was lost in heavy floods of merely loquacious "shredded prose." For fully six years there was produced an incalculable quantity of tiresome exhibitionism. Most of this verse was frankly bad. But so, the defenders of *vers libre* objected, are most sonnets. The fact, however, remains that the original exponents of free verse began to look with distrust on the dubious accomplishments of their camp-followers. H. D.'s chiseled lines, Amy Lowell's enameled pictures, Edgar Lee Masters' brusque epitaphs remain unusual examples of their genre. Other writers gave this amorphous medium a certain definiteness: John Gould Fletcher based his symphonic effects on free sweep and cadence instead of meter; Maxwell Bodenheim forced unions of unhappy nouns and pitiless adjectives without benefit of rhyme; Alfred Kreymborg perfected a type of staccato whimsy in which no particular beat was perceptible. But the poets themselves, partly because of the wish to change, partly to show that they were not bound by a theory, began to turn back to orthodox patterns.

Amy Lowell's last work was largely in formal verse; her later rhymes and ballads relied greatly on the steady pace of iambics. Bodenheim and Fletcher employed more symmetrical structures; Masters returned to the blank verse of his youth. H. D., who was the one perfect Imagist, the surest artisan in unrhymed cadence, achieved delicate effects in interwoven rhyme. And Kreymborg, who surpassed them all in metrical eccentricities, whose lines were so brittle and elusive that melodic comments (performed by the poet on his mandolute) were required to fill out the elisions, finally turned to the creation of straightforward sonnets and simple couplets.

To what can we attribute the return of the prodigal *vers libertine?* To a reversion to orthodox type? Or a revulsion from mere novelty of expression? It seems more likely that, having passed through various phases of experimentation, these poets, like all other workers, desired to crystallize their idiom in some lasting shape. The chief fault with free verse was that it yielded too easily, and what the creator enjoys is the feel of a firm medium, a half-forbidding, half-pliant form. No real artist has failed to want—and work with—"the resisting mass."

FOLK-RHYTHMS AND THE NEGRO

In a country that has not been mellowed by antiquity, that has not possessed songs for its peasantry or traditions for its singers, one cannot look for a wealth of folk-stuff. In such a country—the United States, to be specific—what folk-poetry there is has followed the path of the pioneer. At first these homely songs were mere adaptations and localized versions of English ballads and border minstrelsy, of which Cecil Sharp's

Folk Songs of the Appalachian Highlands and the *Lonesome Tunes* recovered in the Kentucky mountains by Howard Brockway and Loraine Wyman are excellent examples. But a more definitely native spirit found expression in various sections of these States. In the West (during the Seventies) Bret Harte and John Hay celebrated, in their own accents, the rough miners, ranchers, steamboat pilots, the supposed descendants of the emigrants from Pike County, Missouri. In the Middle West the desire for local color and music led to the popularity of James Whitcomb Riley's Hoosier ballads and the spirited jingles of Eugene Field. In the South the inspiration of the negro spirituals and ante bellum songs was utilized to excellent effect by Irwin Russell, Joel Chandler Harris and, later, by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

The Indian, a more ancient primitive, has remained as difficult to adopt poetically as he has been to assimilate ethnically. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the white and red races are worlds apart in sentiment, philosophy, and attitude to life, many gallant attempts were made to bring the spirit of the Indian into our literature. The late Natalie Curtis Burlin did excellent pioneering work in *The Indians' Book;* Mary Austin, in spite of a far-fetched theory and dubious conclusions, made an extended study of the matter in *The American Rhythm;* and *The Path on the Rainbow,* edited by George W. Cronyn in 1918, proved to be the best collection on the subject available to the public. Among the individual workers in the field, other than those mentioned, praise was given to Constance Lindsay Skinner, Alice Corbin Henderson, Witter Bynner and Lew Sarett. Of these, Sarett was most successful in capturing the fluid combination of dance, tune, ejaculation, and occasional vivid phrase which constitute the poetry of the North American Indian.

Since the days of Dunbar, the Negro had made great strides in self-expression. American music—"classical" as well as popular—benefited from the strong insistence of African drums and the syncopated shuffling of the feet of slaves. Jazz itself became glorified; the intelligentsia claimed it as their own! In sociology the Negro, through men like W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Benjamin Brawley, Walter White, turned to be his own analyst. In poetry the results were mixed and uneven. But it became apparent that the Negro was beginning to free himself, not only from a sentimentality designed to please the whites, but from an attitude which was not so much race-conscious as self-conscious. He established his identity at the same time as his poetic integrity.

Beginning in about 1922, the Negro, so long despised as a creator, became a literary fashion. Several volumes of the stirring Spirituals were followed by collections of his secular songs, "blues," "mellows," work-ballads, etc. His ante bellum chants swept over post-war America and Europe; his primitive rhythms affected the most sophisticated of modern composers. James Weldon Johnson's pioneer anthology, *American Negro Poetry* (1922), was followed by Countée Cullen's *Caroling Dusk* (1927) and C. V. Calverton's *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* (1929). Appraisal set in almost simultaneously; a dozen tomes bristling with energy and research appeared, one of them (*American Negro Folk-Songs* by Newman I. White) containing over eight hundred songs divided into thirteen groups. These imposingly annotated collections, added to the more original work, made interest assume the proportions of a Revival. The Negro himself became suddenly articulate; his novels, essays, poems—many of them of unsuspected high caliber—were published everywhere. James Weldon Johnson, after a long career as propagandist, leapt into prominence with *God's Trombones,* seven negro sermons in verse; Claude McKay expressed a stern if over-violent spirit in verse and prose; Countée Cullen, Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer ranged from dulcet lyrics to hot "blues" and savage protests. For a while the Negro gained and suffered from being a craze. Then the cult passed; the genuine creations remained.

Meanwhile, scholars all over America were ransacking every backwood and byway. South Carolina ballads, songs of Maine lumberjacks, ballads of men who worked in the woods of Wisconsin, songs of the "shanty-boy" of Michigan and Minnesota, original and derived folk-tunes of the South, cowboy songs from the West—into every State the recorders went, hot on the trail of the vanishing folk-idiom. The poets were not far behind. The tradition of Harte and Hay was carried on by such interpreters as Harry Herbert Knibbs, Badger Clark and Edwin Ford Piper. The Kentucky Mountain region was interpreted by Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Roy Helton. The "white South" found expression through John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Merrill Moore and DuBose Heyward. A group of Oregon poets—Oluf Olsen, H. L. Davis, H. M. Corning—emerged in the late 1920s. But, of all who approximated the spirit of folk-poetry, none made more striking or more indubitably American contributions than Vachel Lindsay of Springfield, Illinois.

LINDSAY AND OPPENHEIM

Lindsay was essentially a people's poet. He did not hesitate to express himself in terms of the lowest common denominator; his fingers seemed alternately on his pen and the public pulse. Living near enough to the South to appreciate the Negroes' qualities without wishing to theatricalize them, Lindsay was tremendously influenced by the colorful suggestions, the fantastic superstitions, the revivalistic gusto, the half-savage Christianity and, above all, by the curiously syncopated music that once characterized the black man in America. In "The Congo," "John Brown" and the less extended "Simon Legree," the words roll with the solemnity of an exhortation, dance with a grotesque fervor, or snap, crackle, and leap with all the humorous rhythms of a piece of "ragtime." Lindsay caught the burly color and boisterous music of camp-meetings, minstrel shows, revival jubilees. He was an itinerant evangelist preaching the Gospel through a saxophone.

And Lindsay did more. He carried his democratic determinations further than any of his *confrères*. Dreaming of a great communal Art, he insisted that all villages should be centers of beauty, all citizens, artists. At heart a missionary even more than a minstrel, Lindsay often lost himself in his own doctrines. Worse, he frequently cheapened himself and caricatured his own gift by pandering to the vaudeville instinct, putting a noisy "punch" into everything, regardless of taste, artistry or a sense of proportion. He was most impressive when purely fantastic (as in "The Ghosts of the Buffaloes," the shorter fancies, the series of metaphorical poems about the moon) or when a greater theme and a finer restraint unite (as in "The Eagle That Is Forgotten") to create a preaching that does not cease to be poetry.

Something of the same blend of prophet and poet was found in the work of James Oppenheim. Oppenheim, a throwback to the ancient Hebrew singers, rolled the music of the Psalms through his lines; his poetry, with its obvious reminders of Whitman, was biblical in its inflection, Oriental in its heat. It carried to the Western world the color of the East, adding the gift of prophecy to pragmatic purpose. In books like *War and Laughter* and *Songs for the New Age* the race of god-breakers and god-makers spoke with a new voice; here, with analytic intensity, the old iconoclasm and still older worship were united.

WAR AND POST-WAR

The World War, in spite of the "glory-boys," was anything but an apotheosis; being scarcely more glamorous than monotonous murder, it could not be glorified. Abetted by those who, far from the firing-line, fought recklessly in print, it brought forth vast quantities of verse but practically no poetry. America produced no recorder to rank with Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, C. H. Sorley, Edmund Blunden, or Wilfred Owen. The Western front "made" Alan Seeger and Joyce Kilmer, but death on the battlefield was responsible for their reputation, and both names persist, each by virtue of a single poem, one of which (wholly unrelated to war) has become "The Rosary" of American letters. Our reaction to life in the trenches was far greater than our participation in it. Suffering less from shell-shock than post-war disillusion, many of the younger writers indulged themselves in prolonged literary nerves. T. S. Eliot (mistakenly) became their prophet, detachment and despair their contradictory gods. Eliot, previously, had projected the wastes of futility, accentuating them by juxtaposing tragedy and triviality. The early "Prufrock" and "Sweeney" series accomplished the effect in an acrid light verse; Eliot's later ironies emphasized, with new bitterness, the hollowness of a life without purpose and without faith. Far from celebrating the feeble, Eliot satirized the futilitarians:

> We are the hollow men
> We are the stuffed men
> Leaning together
> Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
> Our dried voices, when
> We whisper together

Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without color,
Paralyzed force, gesture without motion

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

But most of those so strongly influenced by Eliot—and by Eliot's influences—captured nothing except his (and Jules Laforgue's) idiom. His abrupt allusiveness, his style at once coarse and subtle, his emotional acuteness, could be imitated but not captured; his unacknowledged disciples merely parodied the trick of disassociation, the erudition without Eliot's wisdom, the gesture without (if I may misquote) emotion. The results were inevitable; sterile intellectualism at one extreme, infantile barbarism at the other.

The common reader, confronted by the extremely "modernist," poet, was unsure whether to claim his rights as reader, or turn altogether from what seemed a communication that communicated nothing more intelligible than the author's wish to be let alone. Robert Graves and Laura Riding in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* summarized the situation: "The bond between the Victorian poet and his reader was at least an agreement between them of a common, though not an original, sentiment. The meaning of a poem was understood between them beforehand from the very title, and the persuasion of the word-music was intended to keep the poem vibrating in the memory long after it had been read. . . . The modernist poet does not have to issue a program declaring his intentions toward the reader or to issue an announcement of tactics. . . . The important part of poetry is now not the personality of the poet as embodied in a poem, but the personality of the poem itself; that is, its quality of independence from both the reader and the poet, once the poet has separated it from his personality by making it complete—a new and self-explanatory creature."

Sometimes these "self-explanatory creatures" explained; sometimes they did not. Often they exhibited nothing more specific than self-conscious snobbery. But the best of them, oppressed by the dead hand of the past, were effective in their revolt; they destroyed that semi-comatose condition which so often attends the reading of poetry and (being a criticism of bad poetry as well as of the reader) revealed new wit, new vitality, new signals of beauty beneath the surface oddities. Thus E. E. Cummings, a lyrical poet in spite of his program, wrote: "To create is first of all to destroy. . . . There is and can be no such thing as authentic art until the *bons trucs* (whereby we are taught to see and imitate on canvas and in stone and by words this so-called world) are entirely and thoroughly and perfectly annihilated by that vast and painful process of unthinking which may result in a minute bit of purely personal feeling. Which minute bit is art."

Thus we had the phenomenon of Gertrude Stein "destroying" the English language, attempting to create a speech in which words had only abstract values, and James Joyce, in his later work, breaking up and reconstructing syllables until they resembled a colorful game of anagrams. Between a literature of obscure scholasticism and experiments in "the vast and painful process of unthinking," the younger writers evolved a phase if not a philosophy of their own. Malcolm Cowley, expressing this for them, summarized it: "We ourselves have found that most of our philosophical difficulties can be solved not by philosophy itself, but by living on, by changing one's angle of approach, and often simply by changing one's place. The war, which carried many of our generation into strange countries, had a partly intellectual, partly emotional effect that is generally disregarded. It destroyed our sense of dull security and taught us to live from day to day. It gave us a thirst for action and adventure. It presented us with violent contrasts, with very simple tragedies, and so led us back toward the old themes of love and death."

Lines divided, ran parallel; groups coalesced, split apart; many tendencies were in the air at one time. The difficult and re-creative "process of unthinking" often degenerated into mere thoughtlessness, a tendency glorified by the "Super-realists" and the editors of *transition*. Opposed to this, the classicism of Eliot pointed in a contrary direction. Joined to a cool scholasticism, a new orderliness came to offset the loose writing and looser thinking of the free verse plethora. The most distinguished of these groups was "The Fugitives," centering (not inappropriately) about a university, in Nashville, Tennessee. Its members—especially John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, Merrill Moore, Robert Penn Warren—were experimenters, but they realized that experimentation in itself was not of fundamental importance. Founded on a definite esthetic, intellectual rather than emotional, their work achieved a shapeliness in which thought restrained sentiment, in which conception and perception were skillfully balanced. A new semi-cavalier grace became apparent. Wallace Stevens, a few years previously, had perfected an orchidaceous flowering of words from words; his abstract elegance was shared by Hart Crane who, however, extended it to include subjects not only mechanistic and local but national. Rhetoric and plain speech flourished side by side. The euphuistic distortions of Maxwell Bodenheim, the overluxuriant figures of E. E. Cummings, grew in the same lustrum as the austere, later lyrics of Sara Teasdale and the emotional directness of Edna St. Vincent Millay.

THE NEW LYRICISTS

During the pendulum play of convention and revolt, the lyric note fluctuated little. Conrad Aiken developed a music which, if crepuscular, was harmonically subtle and gravely sensitive. Archibald MacLeish, turning his indebtedness to Aiken and Eliot to good account, employed suspension and dissonance to achieve effects that reached far beyond their technique. Stephen Vincent Benét and William Rose Benét, brothers in blood and balladry, plundered modernity and antiquity for their fancies; the former taking the Civil War for a background in *John Brown's Body*, constructed a many-voiced lyric of epic proportions. John Hall Wheelock luxuriated in leaping if somewhat loudly determined affirmations. George Dillon, a singer in water-color, composed delicately patterned interrogations. The short lyrics of Robert Frost grew in strength and suggestiveness.

The work of the women ranged from the outspoken to the involved. Two distinct influences governed most of them: Emily Dickinson and Lizette Woodworth Reese. The epigrammatic condensations of the former, unknown in her lifetime, affected an entire generation with increasing force. The firm speech and sparse imagery of the latter won many away from the lush and cloying love-songs of the type enshrined in 1842 by Rufus W. Griswold in his waxwork *Gems from American Female Poets*. Edna St. Vincent Millay, in the later sonnets no less than in the early "Renascence," deepened an already impassioned note, increasing the admiration as well as the size of her audience. Sara Teasdale intensified a simple but flexible melodic line. Genevieve Taggard and Jean Starr Untermeyer lifted the ordinary round of woman's everyday into the extraordinary and, not seldom, into the ecstatic.

Others, refining their poetry of a too thickly human passion, turned to an elliptical metaphysics. The "mechanism of sensibility" brought them back to Crashaw, Vaughan, Webster, Ford and Donne. One caught the overtones of the late Elizabethans in the accents of Louise Bogan, Léonie Adams, Hazel Hall, Elinor Wylie, among others. Elinor Wylie acknowledged the relationship implicitly, the title of her first volume (*Nets to Catch the Wind*) being taken from a poem by Webster, the title of her last (*Angels and Earthly Creatures*) from a sermon by Donne. But these poets did not depend too much on intellectual virtuosity and involuted images; their sensibility was their own. Less prodigal (and, it may be added, less passionate) than Donne and his followers, they reflected something of his order and his fiercely conceived beauty through temperaments essentially modern and feminine. Elinor Wylie, never "confusing the spiritual and the sensual either through false fear or false reverence," began with verbal brilliance and ended by celebrating the radiance of spirit and "the pure and valiant mind." Léonie Adams, a more withdrawn metaphysician, yielded her secret only to those who were already poets, though even the unlettered could sense the music and authority of her verse. Louise Bogan, pursued by the mutability of time, and Hazel Hall, haunted by the finality of death, outlined a poetry that was both sensuous and cerebral.

RANGE AND DIFFERENCE

The poets of the period answered the demands put upon them by a rapidly changing civilization. They reflected the paradoxical energy of the age and its sterility, its contradictory appetite for realism and fantasy, its skepticism and the faith submerged beneath doubtful searching. They won their audience by their very differences. They sounded a range hitherto barely suggested in America, creating a poetry panoramic instead of parochial. Differing widely from most of their English fellow-craftsmen, they were far less hampered by the burdens of tradition or the necessity of casting them off. The temper of the times was for catholicity, for variety of thought and gesture. All forms were used, new ones invented. Both in the conventional and in the experimental modes, America became a literary melting-pot. The very variety of subject matter was in striking opposition to the thin, limited products of the transition poet. Geographically, the range was no less wide. New England ceased to be the one literary center; there was scarcely a village which could not boast a local laureate. As the country matured, the poets grew with it, springing up in most unlikely places, ready to celebrate urban miracles of stone and steel as well as gaunt prairie silences.

Evaluations and reappraisals followed. Poets turned critics, critics returned to poetry. The period was shrewdly analyzed by Conrad Aiken, Amy Lowell, Edmund Wilson, Allen Tate, Malcolm Cowley and by Yvor Winters, whose practice fell short of his excellent theories.

It was as if submerged springs had suddenly burst through arid soil; instead of one placid stream, there were a dozen rushing currents, a score of unsuspected freshets.

THE NEW SPIRIT

It is a happy circumstance that this volume should begin with Emily Dickinson. For here was a forerunner of the new spirit—free in expression, unhampered in choice of subject, penetrative in psychology—to which a countryful of writers responded.

Most of the poets represented in these pages found vigorous material in a world of honest and often harsh reality. They learned to distinguish beauty from prettiness; to wring loveliness out of squalor; to search for truth even in the dark caves of the unconscious.

And with the use of the material of everyday life, there came a further simplification: the use of the language of everyday speech. The stilted and mouth-filling phrases were practically discarded in favor of the daily vocabulary. It would be hard to find a representative poet employing such awkward and outworn contractions as *'twixt, 'mongst, ope'*; such evidences of poor padding as *adown, did go, doth smile;* such dull rubber-stamps (*clichés* is the French term) as *heavenly blue, roseate glow, golden hope, girlish grace, gentle breeze,* etc. The *peradventures, forsooths* and *mayhaps* have disappeared (one hopes) forever.

As the speech of the modern poet grew less elaborate, so did the patterns embodying it. Not necessarily discarding rhyme, regular rhythm or any of the musical assets of the older poets, forms grew simpler; the intricate versification gave way to lines that reflect and suggest the tones of animated and even exalted speech.

One could go into minute particulars concerning the growth of an American spirit in our literature and point out how many of the poets responded to forces larger than their backgrounds. Such a course would be endless and unprofitable. It is pertinent, however, to observe that, young as this nation is, it is already being supplied with the stuff of legends, ballads and even epics. Most of the modern singers turned to their own locale for indigenous material. They turned impartially to mountain songs, city stories, semi-mythical figures like John Brown and Paul Bunyan, transformed heroes (*vide* the growth of a legendary Lincoln apart from the actual one), to the intricate relation of men and machines. Believing not only in the uncertainties of struggle but in the certainty of some sort of goal, they achieved, through search and experiment, that order out of chaos which is poetry.

In conclusion it must be repeated that, though this collection claims to be panoramic it is also critical. Detailed study of every corner of the field is, therefore, impossible; the period being particularly rich in these so articulate States, many omissions were imperative. In extenuation the editor, maintaining that art itself is only a record of temperament and taste, pleads—as all editors must—*chacun à son gout.* He realizes that any gathering, no matter how voluminous, cannot be a summary but only an introduction to an epoch. The purpose of an anthology, he concludes dogmatically, is to stimulate interest rather than to satisfy curiosity. It is the provoking as well as the sharing of enjoyment, which, at the heart of the poet, is the very purpose of poetry.

L. U.

EMILY DICKINSON

Emily (Norcross) Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, December 10, 1830. With the exception of a sudden crisis in her early twenties, her life was bare of outward adventure. Her childhood had the ordinary uneventful events common to other children in Amherst which at that time was so remote that, only a few years before, her mother's dower had been brought to the town by brindle oxen. Her father, Edward Dickinson, a lawyer and "pillar of the church," was her adoration as well as her greatest influence; her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, in her valuable *Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson,* quotes Emily as saying, "If father is asleep on the sofa the house is full." At sixteen she formed the closest friendship with a girl who visited Amherst, who later married her brother Austin, and (as "Sister Sue") was the only one to share her secrets and her manuscripts. At seventeen Emily entered South Hadley Female Seminary, disliked it intensely, grew homesick, rebelled at the extremities of its Puritanism and, on one occasion, packed her bags and took the stage home. From eighteen to twenty-three she was, according to her biographer, "a social creature in the highest sense."

When she was twenty-three, she spent a winter in Washington with her father who was in Congress for two terms. In the spring of 1854 Emily visited Philadelphia and there encountered that which was to influence her life—and her poetry—so profoundly. The details are still largely a matter of surmise. As late as 1924 Madame Bianchi (Sue's daughter) wrote, "Even now, after the many slow years she has been removed from us in the body, her spirit hinders the baring of that chapter which has been so universally misunderstood." It is, however, an open secret that Emily fell suddenly and completely in love with a man already married, made "the great renunciation" (partly because of the strict pattern in which she had been reared, partly because she could not bring unhappiness to another woman) and rushed desperately home. From that time she went on alone, clinging always closer to her father's house. Her life became as confined as a nun's; she withdrew from any public appearance; for thirty years she scarcely set foot beyond her own doorstep.

During her lifetime four of her poems were published—through no desire of her own. She never thought of publication, never cared to capitalize her emotions; even more deeply than Heine she could have cried, "*Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen mach ich die kleinen Lieder*"—and these brief, almost telegraphic revelations have outlasted the more pretentious writing of a century. In 1890, four years after her death, the first volume of her posthumous poetry appeared with an introduction by Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

"She habitually concealed her mind, like her person, from all but a very few friends," writes Higginson, "and it was with great difficulty that she was persuaded to print, during her lifetime, three or four poems." Yet she wrote over eight hundred of these direct and spontaneous illuminations, sending many of them in letters to friends, or (written on chance slips of paper and delivered without further comment) to her sister Sue. Slowly the peculiar Blake-like quality of her thought won a small circle of readers; *Poems* (1890) was followed by *Poems—Second Series* (1892) and *Poems—Third Series* (1896), the contents being collected and edited by her two friends, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd. Several years later, a further generous volume was assembled by her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, entitled *The Single Hound* (1914).

Although most of the poems were published in the Nineties and although the recent revival of interest in poetry drew attention to the peculiar individuality of Emily Dickinson's expression, her readers remained few. An occasional article appeared, showing her "lack of control" or, beneath a cover of condescension, ridiculing her "hit-or-miss grammar, sterile rhythms, and appalling rhymes." A devotee here and there defended the quaint charm of her use of assonance and half-rhyming vowels. Her audience grew—but gradually. Suddenly, without warning, she leaped into international prominence. Almost forty years after her death, her name became a poetic shibboleth. The year 1924 saw the publication of Martha Dickinson Bianchi's important volume, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson,* the first collected *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (published by Little, Brown and Company) and the first English compilation, *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson,* edited with a prefatory essay by Conrad Aiken.

The enthusiasm attending the triple appearance was unbounded. Martin Armstrong, the English poet, said, "Mr. Aiken calls Emily Dickinson's poetry 'perhaps the finest by a woman in the English language.' I quarrel only with his 'perhaps.'" Nor were other plaudits less vociferous. "A feminine Blake," "an epigrammatic Walt Whitman," "a New England mystic," were a few of the characterizations fastened upon her. Other appraisals sought to "interpret" her involved but seldom obscure verses in the light of the "mystery" of her life. But "The Amherst Nun" would have repudiated the amateur psychoanalysts as vigorously as she, whose verses and letters brim with mischievous fancy, would have laughed at their epithets.

Forty-two years after her death, an accident verging on the miraculous revealed one hundred and seventy-six hitherto unpublished poems. Their appearance in *Further Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1929) created something of a furore. Reactions ranged from hosannahs of praise to cries of incredulity. Yet there could be no doubt of the authenticity of the new poems; Emily Dickinson's peculiar seal, her inimitable idiom was stamped on every line. Had she written nothing but this one book she would have to be reckoned among the major poets. Here again, but more brilliantly realized, are the rapid ascent of images and the sudden swoop of immensities, the keen epithet that cuts to the deepest layer of consciousness, and the paradox on whose point innumerable angels dance. She is Blake one moment, Vaughan the next, then Jonathan Edwards, and herself all the time. Emotion, idea and words are not marshaled in their usual order; they spring simultaneously, inevitably, one including the other. Here is the effect—never the affectation—of emotion and its enveloping phrase.

In the unearthed poems, even more fully than in her others, Emily Dickinson told the secret of her love, her first rebellious impulse, her inner denial, her resignation, her assured waiting for reunion in Eternity. There is little to add except meaningless names and irrelevant street numbers.

I took one draught of life,
I'll tell you what I paid,
Precisely an existence—
The market-price, they said.

They weighed me, dust by dust,
They balanced film with film,
Then handed me my being's worth—
A single dram of Heaven.

The story of that "single dram" is bare of spectacular event. In her mid-twenties, as has been related, Emily went to Philadelphia. Up to that time she had been light-hearted, a coquette; she might, she confided, have been Eve—or the belle of Amherst. In Philadelphia she attended church, heard a sermon, met the young preacher, "took the immortal wound." [1] Emily records the instant mutual recognition in a poem beginning:

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[1] In *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background* (1930), Josephine Pollitt argues that her "secret love" was not the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, but Major Edward Bissell Hunt, Helen Hunt (Jackson's) first husband—Miss Pollitt's argument being plausible though not convincing.

So the eyes accost and sunder
In an audience.

And in another she tells us:

It was a quiet way
He asked if I was his.
I made no answer of the tongue
But answer of the eyes.

Their love for each other was quickly acknowledged, confirmed, established. "I'm ceded," she cried. "Mine by the right of the white election!" She reiterated it again and again: "Where thou art—that is Home." "One and one are One." "Forever at his side to walk, the smaller of the two." But reality intervened. He was a minister, married, with a child. Emily could not "be at his side," neither could she think of leaving him. She struggled; thought of daring "all for love."

Her backgrounds and her inheritance were too much for her. Suddenly, she fled back to Amherst. It is no secret that, bereft of her, the man flung all to the winds and rushed after Emily. No one knows what was said during those hours at Amherst, but both her sisters (Lavinia and Sue) held that Emily was the one who resisted. What that resistance cost her is evident in the most impassioned poems written by any woman except Sappho. Her lines run the gamut of love in absence, the unreason of emotion and the inability to reason it away, the long lethargy of grief. The man's death a few years later made her accept the finality of loss, though the resignation was no less bitter. She repeated her convictions, emphasizing them in the poems beginning, "Although I put away his life," "You see, I cannot see your lifetime," "Denial is the only fact received by the denied," "Renunciation is the choosing against itself," "You taught me waiting with myself," "Longing is like the seed that wrestles in the ground," "After great pain a formal feeling comes," "There is a languor of the life more imminent than pain," "There is a pain so utter it swallows Being up," "At leisure is the soul that gets a staggering blow." . . . This is no willing surrender to circumstance.

Then calm. Then looking forward to death, to reunion; backward to the minutiae of life magnified by thwarted emotion. It is for this reason that the divisions made by the editors in her volumes are arbitrary and misleading. "Life," "Love," "Time and Eternity" were not separate or sequential to Emily; one impinged upon and became part of the other.

It is interesting if not significant that Emily Dickinson had written but little poetry until a few years after the frustrated love affair. In 1862, in her thirty-second year, she wrote to a friend, "I made no verse, but one or two, until this winter."

Her own words to the contrary, this statement is not strictly accurate. She had sent miniature poems to her friends for years; in her early twenties, she had delighted in making mock-heroic valentines; in 1854-5, "Sister Sue" received more than a dozen rhymes which, although not as flexible or as experimental as her later work, prove her quality. But after 1854, the poetry was wholly different in character.

That her verses were sometimes erratic, half-done, and thrown off in the heat of creation is self-evident. But, in the great majority of her poems, the leap of thought is so daring, the gaps so provocative, that passages which, in a smaller spirit, would be merely pretty or audacious conceits become snatches of revelation. Is it a flippancy or an anguished cry when, robbed by Life, she stands "a beggar before the door of God," and confronts Him with "Burglar, banker, father!" Is it anything less than Olympian satire when, asking God to accept "the supreme iniquity," she declares:

We apologize to Thee
For Thine own duplicity.

Beauty, love, justice—these were no abstractions to her, but entities, weights and measures, which the architect had failed to use perfectly. She sought the Builder not to commend but to question him. Emily argued, upbraided, accused Creation; she recognized an angel only when she wrestled with him. Paradox was her native element.

Her gnomic imagery was tremendous in implication and the range far greater than a first reading reveals. Although the poet often indulged herself by retreating into a style cryptic and wayward, her tiny quatrains are lavish with huge ideas and almost overpowering figures. She speaks of music as "the silver strife"; she sees the railway train "lap the miles and lick the valleys up"; she speaks ironically of splitting the lark to find the music "bulb after bulb in silver rolled"; she pictures the thunder crumbling "like a stuff" while the lightning "skipped like mice"; she glimpses evening as "the house-wife in the west" sweeping the sunset "with many colored brooms"; she asks "who laid the rainbow piers." Pondering on the power of words, she meditates:

Could mortal lip divine
  The undeveloped freight
Of a delivered syllable,
  'Twould crumble with the weight.

Her letters, although marred with affectations distressingly coy, have at their best an impish irreverence and beauty. All definitions of poetry fail to give us the very breath of the matter which Emily Dickinson evoked in an impromptu scribble:

> "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know it is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know this is poetry. These are the only ways I know it."

Her technique was as variable as her mood. Conrad Aiken has summed up her contradictions with enviable clarity; his finale is (with Mrs. Bianchi's comprehensive *Life*) one of the best introductions to Emily Dickinson yet written. "Her disregard," says Aiken, "for accepted forms or for regularities was incorrigible. Grammar, rhyme, meter,—anything went by the board if it stood in the way of thought or freedom of utterance. Sometimes this arrogance was justified; sometimes not. . . . Once adjust oneself to the spinsterly angularity of the mode, its lack of eloquence or rhetorical speed, its naïve and often prosaic directness, one discovers felicities of thought and phrase on every page. The magic is terse and sure. And ultimately one simply sighs at Miss Dickinson's singular perversity, her lapses and tyrannies, and accepts them as an inevitable part of the strange and original genius she was."

In 1884 she was stricken, like her father, with Bright's disease. Two years later, on May 16, 1886, this woman with "the soul of a monk of the Middle Ages bound up in the flesh of a Puritan" died at Amherst. Few were present at the funeral; fewer still dreamed that she would outlive the obituary in the *Springfield Republican.* Today her place is secure; her work is definitely

Of the colossal substance
Of immortality.

The obvious defects have been accepted, even exaggerated by a host of imitators; they have a charm wholly their own. Her vivacity excuses her violations; it covers self-consciousness and carries off a too frequent archness. The consistency of her imperfections is, in itself, a kind of perfection. A personal magic lies in whatever her imagination touches: a dog's "belated feet, like intermittent plush"; an engine neighing "like Boanerges"; a humming-bird, "a route of evanescence, a resonance of emerald"; a mushroom whose whole career "is shorter than a snake's delay"; the wind "tapping like a tired man"—everything is invested with a life beyond its own; every day is crowded with intimations of eternity. Within her four walls, Emily Dickinson beheld with fixed attention more than can be seen with the roving eye. She did not need the world who contained a universe.

THE POETS[1]

I reckon, when I count at all,
First Poets—then the Sun—
Then Summer—then the Heaven of God—
And then the list is done.
But looking back—the first so seems
To comprehend the whole—
The others look a needless show,
So I write Poets—All.
Their summer lasts a solid year,
They can afford a sun
The East would deem extravagant,
And if the final Heaven
Be beautiful as they disclose
To those who trust in them,
It is too difficult a grace
To justify the dream.

"OF COURSE I PRAYED—"

Of course I prayed—
And did God care?
He cared as much as
On the air
A bird had stamped her foot
And cried "Give me!"

My reason, life,
I had not had, but for yourself.
'Twere better charity
To leave me in the atom's tomb,
Merry and nought and gay and numb,
Than this smart misery.

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[1] All the poems of Emily Dickinson are reprinted from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* and *Further Poems by Emily Dickinson* by special permission of the publishers, Little, Brown and Company.

“THERE IS NO FRIGATE LIKE A BOOK”

solace bible

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

“I HAD BEEN HUNGRY ALL THE YEARS”

[illegible]

I had been hungry all the years;
My noon had come to dine;
I, trembling, drew the table near,
And touched the curious wine.

’Twas this on tables I had seen,
When turning, hungry, lone,
I looked in windows, for the wealth
I could not hope to own.

I did not know the ample bread;
’Twas so unlike the crumb
The birds and I had often shared
In Nature’s dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, ’twas so new,—
Myself felt ill and odd,
As berry of a mountain bush
Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found
That hunger was a way
Of persons outside windows,
The entering takes away.

“THE HEART ASKS PLEASURE FIRST”

The heart asks pleasure first;
And then, excuse from pain;

And then, those little anodynes
That deaden suffering;

And then, to go to sleep;
And then, if it should be
The will of its Inquisitor,
The liberty to die.

"MY LIFE CLOSED TWICE BEFORE ITS CLOSE"

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive,
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

"I CANNOT LIVE WITH YOU"

I cannot live with you.
It would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,
Putting up
Our life, his porcelain,
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,
Quaint or broken;
A newer Sèvres pleases,
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,
For one must wait
To shut the other's gaze down,
You could not.

And I, could I stand by
And see you freeze,
Without my right of frost,
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,
Because your face
Would put out Jesus',
That new grace

Grow plain and foreign
On my homesick eye,
Except that you, than he
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us—how?
For you served Heaven, you know,
Or sought to;
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,
And I had no more eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me.

So we must keep apart,
You there, I here,
With just the door ajar
That oceans are,
And prayer,
And that pale sustenance,
Despair!

"THERE'S A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT"

There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything,
'Tis the seal, despair,—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath;
When it goes, 'tis like the distance
On the look of death.

"I HEARD A FLY BUZZ WHEN I DIED"

I heard a fly buzz when I died;
  The stillness round my form
Was like the stillness in the air
  Between the heaves of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,
  And breaths were gathering sure
For that last onset, when the king
  Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away
  What portion of me I
Could make assignable,—and then
  There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,
  Between the light and me;
And then the windows failed, and then
  I could not see to see.

"I MEASURE EVERY GRIEF I MEET"

I measure every grief I meet
With analytic eyes;
I wonder if it weighs like mine,
Or has an easier size.

I wonder if they bore it long,
Or did it just begin?
I could not tell the date of mine,
It feels so old a pain.

I wonder if it hurts to live,
And if they have to try,
And whether, could they choose between,
They would not rather die.

I wonder if when years have piled—
Some thousands—on the cause
Of early hurt, if such a lapse
Could give them any pause;

Or would they go on aching still
Through centuries above,
Enlightened to a larger pain
By contrast with the love.

The grieved are many, I am told;
The reason deeper lies,—
Death is but one and comes but once,
And only nails the eyes.

There's grief of want, and grief of cold,—
A sort they call "despair";
There's banishment from native eyes,
In sight of native air.

And though I may not guess the kind
Correctly, yet to me
A piercing comfort it affords
In passing Calvary,

To note the fashions of the cross,
Of those that stand alone,
Still fascinated to presume
That some are like my own.

"THE BRAIN IS WIDER THAN THE SKY"

The brain is wider than the sky,
  For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
  With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea,
  For, hold them, blue to blue,
The one the other will absorb,
  As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,
  For, lift them, pound for pound,
And they will differ, if they do,
  As syllable from sound.

"BRING ME THE SUNSET IN A CUP"

Bring me the sunset in a cup,
Reckon the morning's flagons up,
  And say how many dew;
Tell me how far the morning leaps,
Tell me what time the weaver sleeps
  Who spun the breadths of blue!

Write me how many notes there be
In the new robin's ecstasy
  Among astonished boughs;
How many trips the tortoise makes,
How many cups the bee partakes,—
  The debauchee of dews!

Also, who laid the rainbow's piers,
Also, who leads the docile spheres
  By withes of supple blue?
Whose fingers string the stalactite,
Who counts the wampum of the night,
  To see that none is due?

Who built this little Alban house
And shut the windows down so close

My spirit cannot see?
Who'll let me out some gala day,
With implements to fly away,
Passing pomposity?

"A BIRD CAME DOWN THE WALK"

A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

"I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED"

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

"ELYSIUM IS AS FAR"

Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest room,
If in that room a friend await
Felicity or doom.

What fortitude the soul contains,
That it can so endure
The accent of a coming foot,
The opening of a door.

"I NEVER SAW A MOOR"

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in Heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

"I NEVER LOST AS MUCH"

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod;
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,
Reimbursed my store.
Burglar, banker, father,
I am poor once more!

INDIAN SUMMER

These are the days when birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on
The old, old sophistries of June,—
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that can not cheat the bee,
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear,
And softly through the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh, sacrament of summer days,
Oh, last communion in the haze,
Permit a child to join,

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine!

"I DIED FOR BEAUTY"

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth,—the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips
And covered up our names.

MYSTERIES

The murmur of a bee
A witchcraft yieldeth me.
If any ask me why,
'Twere easier to die
Than tell.

The red upon the hill
Taketh away my will;
If anybody sneer,
Take care, for God is here,
That's all.

The breaking of the day
Addeth to my degree;
If any ask me how,
Artist, who drew me so,
Must tell!

"THE SKY IS LOW"

The sky is low, the clouds are mean,
A traveling flake of snow
Across a barn or through a rut
Debates if it will go.

A narrow wind complains all day
How some one treated him.
Nature, like us, is sometimes caught
Without her diadem.

"I LIKE TO SEE IT LAP THE MILES"

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop—docile and omnipotent—
At its own stable door.

"THE TINT I CANNOT TAKE IS BEST"

The tint I cannot take is best,
The color too remote
That I could show it in bazaar
A guinea at a sight—

The fine impalpable array
That swaggers on the eye
Like Cleopatra's company
Repeated in the sky—

The moments of dominion
That happen on the Soul
And leave it with a discontent
Too exquisite to tell—

The eager look on landscapes
As if they just repressed
Some secret that was pushing,
Like chariots, in the breast—

The pleading of the Summer,
That other prank of snow
That covers mystery with tulle
For fear the squirrels know—

Their graspless manners mock us,
Until the cheated eye
Shuts arrogantly in the grave,
Another way to see.

"I DREADED THAT FIRST ROBIN SO"

I dreaded that first robin so,
But he is mastered now,
And I'm accustomed to him grown,—
He hurts a little, though.

I thought if I could only live
Till that first shout got by,
Not all pianos in the woods
Had power to mangle me.

I dared not meet the daffodils,
For fear their yellow gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own.

I wished the grass would hurry,
So when 'twas time to see,
He'd be too tall, the tallest one
Could stretch to look at me.

I could not bear the bees should come,
I wished they'd stay away
In those dim countries where they go:
What word had they for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed,
No blossom stayed away
In gentle deference to me,
A Queen of Calvary.

Each one salutes me as he goes,
And I my childish plumes
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment
Of their unthinking drums.

"THE SOUL SELECTS"

The soul selects her own society,
Then shuts the door;
On her divine majority
Obtrude no more.

Unmoved, she notes the chariots pausing
At her low gate;
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation
Choose one;
Then close the valves of her attention
Like stone.

"AFTER GREAT PAIN A FORMAL FEELING COMES"

After great pain a formal feeling comes—
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs;
The stiff heart questions—was it He that bore?
And yesterday—or centuries before?

The feet mechanical go round
A wooden way,
Of ground or air of Ought,
Regardless grown;
A quartz contentment like a stone.

This is the hour of lead
Remembered if outlived
As freezing persons recollect
The snow—
First chill, then stupor, then
The letting go.

A CEMETERY

This quiet Dust was Gentlemen and Ladies,
    And Lads and Girls;
Was laughter and ability and sighing,
    And frocks and curls.

This passive place a Summer's nimble mansion,
Where Bloom and Bees
Fulfilled their Oriental Circuit,
Then ceased like these.

"AMPLE MAKE THIS BED"

Ample make this bed,
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.

Be its mattress straight,
Be its pillow round;
Let no sunrise' yellow noise
Interrupt this ground.

"ALTHOUGH I PUT AWAY HIS LIFE"

Although I put away his life,
An ornament too grand
For forehead low as mine to wear,
This might have been the hand

That sowed the flowers he preferred,
Or smoothed a homely pain,
Or pushed a pebble from his path,
Or played his chosen tune

On lute the least, the latest,
But just his ear could know
That whatsoe'er delighted it
I never would let go.

The foot to bear his errand
A little boot I know
Would leap abroad like antelope
With just the grant to do.

His weariest commandment
A sweeter to obey
Than "Hide and Seek," or skip to flutes,
Or all day chase the bee.

Your servant, Sir, will weary,
The surgeon will not come,
The world will have its own to do,
The dust will vex your fame.

The cold will force your tightest door
Some February day,
But say my apron bring the sticks
To make your cottage gay,

That I may take that promise
To Paradise with me—
To teach the angels avarice
Your kiss first taught to me!

"THE WORLD FEELS DUSTY"

The world feels dusty
When we stop to die;
We want the dew then,
Honors taste dry.

Flags vex a dying face,
But the least fan
Stirred by a friend's hand
Cools like the rain.

Mine be the ministry
When thy thirst comes,
Dews of thyself to fetch
And holy balms.

HELEN HUNT JACKSON

Helen Maria Fiske was born at Amherst, Massachusetts, October 18, 1831. She was educated in her own State and was married, at twenty-one, to Captain Edward Hunt who died in 1863. She began to write poetry during her first marriage (over the initials "H. H.") and her first volume, *Verses by H. H.*, was published in 1870. She married for the second time in 1875, becoming the wife of William S. Jackson, a Colorado banker. In 1876, under the name of Helen Jackson, she brought out *Sonnets and Lyrics.*

After that time, she devoted herself mostly to prose; several novels were issued and well spoken of, but it was not until 1883 that she achieved national reputation. In that year, she received the appointment of Special Examiner into the conditions of the Mission Indians of California, her protest, *A Century of Dishonor*, having been published two years earlier. In 1884, following her researches, she published the Indian romance, *Ramona*, which has become one of the favorite legends of the West. She died in San Francisco, California, August 12, 1885.

Her poetry, extremely uneven, suffered from the extravagances of the period. Her thought was firm and clear, but an ornate language often clouded her lyrics. She was one of Emily Dickinson's few friends. They were fellow-townsmen and from girlhood, according to Martha Dickinson Bianchi, "Helen looked up to Emily as something supernatural and Emily returned her adoration." "H. H." was a charmer few could withstand and it speaks for Emily Dickinson's resistance to print that she was proof against the fascination of Mrs. Jackson who, according to Sue Dickinson, "earnestly sought her coöperation in a novel for the No Name Series, although one little poem somehow strayed into the volume of verse which appeared in that series." The influence of this friendship affected a small part of Helen Jackson's verse; a Dickinsonian trace may be found in the selection of epithets. Had the intimacy continued, the poetry of "H. H." might have been correspondingly sharper and the phrase might more often have matched the original concept.

DANGER

With what a childish and short-sighted sense
Fear seeks for safety; reckons up the days
Of danger and escape, the hours and ways
Of death; it breathless flies the pestilence;
It walls itself in towers of defense;
By land, by sea, against the storm it lays
Down barriers; then, comforted, it says:
"This spot, this hour is safe." Oh, vain pretense!
Man born of man knows nothing when he goes;
The winds blow where they list, and will disclose
To no man which brings safety, which brings risk.
The mighty are brought low by many a thing
Too small to name. Beneath the daisy's disk
Lies hid the pebble for the fatal sling.

MY STRAWBERRY

O marvel, fruit of fruits, I pause
To reckon thee. I ask what cause
Set free so much of red from heats
At core of earth, and mixed such sweets
With sour and spice: what was that strength
Which out of darkness, length by length,
Spun all thy shining thread of vine,
Netting the fields in bond as thine.
I see thy tendrils drink by sips
From grass and clover's smiling lips;
I hear thy roots dig down for wells,
Tapping the meadow's hidden cells;
Whole generations of green things,
Descended from long lines of springs,
I see make room for thee to bide
A quiet comrade by their side.
I see the creeping peoples go
Mysterious journeys to and fro,
Treading to right and left of thee,
Doing thee homage wonderingly.
I see the wild bees as they fare,
Thy cups of honey drink, but spare.
I mark thee bathe and bathe again
In sweet uncalendared spring rain.
I watch how all May has of sun
Makes haste to have thy ripeness done,
While all her nights let dews escape
To set and cool thy perfect shape.
Ah, fruit of fruits, no more I pause
To dream and seek thy hidden laws!
I stretch my hand and dare to taste,
In instant of delicious waste
On single feast, all things that went
To make the empire thou hast spent.

EMIGRAVIT

With sails full set, the ship her anchor weighs.
Strange names shine out beneath her figure-head.

What glad farewells with eager eyes are said!
What cheer for him who goes, and him who stays!
Fair skies, rich lands, new homes, and untried days
Some go to seek: the rest but wait instead,
Watching the way wherein their comrades led,
Until the next stanch ship her flag doth raise.
Who knows what myriad colonies there are
Of fairest fields, and rich, undreamed-of gains
Thick planted in the distant shining plains
Which we call sky because they lie so far?
Oh, write of me, not "Died in bitter pains,"
But "Emigrated to another star!"

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Thomas Bailey Aldrich was born November 11, 1836, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he spent most of the sixteen years which he has recorded in that delightful memoir, *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869). After a brief clerkship, he became junior literary critic of *The Evening Mirror* at nineteen, publishing his first book (*The Bells*), an immature collection of echoes, at the same time. From 1855 to 1866 he held various journalistic positions, associating himself with the leading metropolitan *literati.* Nathaniel Willis, Bayard Taylor, Edmund Clarence Stedman, William Winter were his intimates, and their influence reënforced the inherent artificiality of Aldrich's tastes. Abetted by his associates he chose the "flicker rather than the flame"; he praised Stedman but despised Whitman, he worshiped Longfellow and belittled Poe, imitated Willis and could see nothing in Emily Dickinson except her "infelicities."

But though Aldrich mingled with the New York group, he was not part of it; he longed for the more rarefied intellectual atmosphere of New England and when, in 1866, Osgood offered him the editorship of *Every Saturday*, published in Boston, Aldrich accepted with alacrity. A few years later he became editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, holding that position from 1881 to 1890. In the meanwhile *The Ballad of Babie Bell* (1858), an incredibly banal and insincere piece of work, and *Pampinea and Other Poems* (1861) had appeared, bearing practically no relation to their times. Other volumes followed; *Complete Poems* being first issued in 1882, though in 1898 Aldrich made a comprehensive revision of all the poems he cared to preserve.

Aldrich's work falls into two sharply divided classes. The first half is full of overloaded phrase-making, fervid extravagances.

The reader sinks beneath clouds of damask, azure, emerald, pearl and gold; he is drowned in a sea of musk, aloes, tiger-lilies, spice, soft music, orchids, attar-breathing dusks. There is no real air in these verses; it is Nature as conceived by a poet reading the Arabian Nights in a hot-house. In company with Stoddard and Taylor, Aldrich dwelt in a literary Orientalism (Stoddard's *Book of the East* followed fast upon Taylor's *Poems of the Orient*) and Aldrich's *Cloth of Gold* was suffused with similar "vanilla-flavored adjectives and patchouli-scented participles" (to quote Holmes), laboring hard to create an exotic atmosphere by a wearisome profusion of lotus blossoms, sandalwood, spikenard, and diaphanous roses.

The other phase of Aldrich's art is more human in appeal and surer in artistry. He learned to sharpen his images, to fashion his smallest lyrics with a well-bred *finesse*. "In the little steel engravings that are the best expressions of his peculiar talent," writes Percy H. Boynton, "there is a fine simplicity; but it is the simplicity of an accomplished woman of the world rather than of a village maid." Although Aldrich bitterly resented the charge that he was a maker of tiny perfections, a carver of cherry-stones, those poems of his which have the best chance of permanence are some of the epigrams, the short lyrics and a few of the sonnets, passionless in tone but exquisite in design.

The best of Aldrich's diffuse poetry has been collected in an inclusive Household Edition, published by Houghton Mifflin Company. He died in 1907.

MEMORY

My mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,
And yet recalls the very hour—
'Twas noon by yonder village tower,
And on the last blue noon in May—
The wind came briskly up this way,
Crisping the brook beside the road;
Then, pausing here, set down its load
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

"ENAMORED ARCHITECT OF AIRY RHYME"

Enamored architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt, heed not what each man says.
Good souls, but innocent of dreamers' ways,
Will come, and marvel why thou wastest time;
Others, beholding how thy turrets climb
'Twixt theirs and heaven, will hate thee all thy days;
But most beware of those who come to praise.
O wondersmith, O worker in sublime
And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all in all;
Build as thou wilt, unspoiled by praise or blame,
Build as thou wilt, and as thy light is given;
Then, if at last the airy structure fall,
Dissolve, and vanish—take thyself no shame.
They fail, and they alone, who have not striven.

IDENTITY

Somewhere—in desolate wind-swept space—
In Twilight-land—in No-man's land—
Two hurrying Shapes met face to face,
And bade each other stand.

"And who are you?" cried one agape,
Shuddering in the gloaming light.
"I know not," said the second Shape,
"I only died last night!"

REALISM

Romance beside his unstrung lute
Lies stricken mute.
The old-time fire, the antique grace,
You will not find them anywhere.
Today we breathe a commonplace,
Polemic, scientific air:
We strip Illusion of her veil;
We vivisect the nightingale
To probe the secret of his note.
The Muse in alien ways remote
Goes wandering.

John Burroughs was born in Roxbury, New York, April 3, 1837. He was reared on his father's farm and in early life was a teacher, journalist, fruit-cultivator. For almost ten years, he was a clerk in the Treasury Department in Washington (from 1863 to 1872) but his early rural life determined his later pursuits. In 1874, he forsook cities, immuring himself on a fruit-farm at West Park, New York. He died March 29, 1921, on his way from California to his home.

One of the best known American naturalists, such books as *Birds and Poets* (1877), *Locusts and Wild Honey* (1879), *Ways of Nature* (1905), *Under the Apple Trees* (1916), declare Burroughs a poet as well as an essayist. Much of his writing took the actual form of verse, a volume of poems, *Bird and Bough*, appearing in 1906. In an era of formalism, his was a free spirit. He championed the cause of Walt Whitman as early as 1867, returning to the subject in 1896 with *Whitman: A Study*. His later works, increasingly philosophic, together with his studies of New England flora and fauna, ranked him as the somewhat milder successor of Thoreau. His life and work reflected his intimacy with Nature and a perception of the laws beyond it.

WAITING

Serene, I fold my hands and wait,
   Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
   For, lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
   For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
   And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,
   The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray,
   Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?
   I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it has sown,
   And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own and draw
  The brook that springs in yonder height;
So flows the good with equal law
  Unto the soul of pure delight.

The stars come nightly to the sky;
  The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high.
  Can keep my own away from me.

JOHN HAY

John Hay was born October 8, 1838, in Salem, Indiana, graduated from Brown University in 1858 and was admitted to the Illinois bar a few years later. At nineteen, when he went back to Warsaw, the little Mississippi town where he had lived as a boy, he dreamed only of being a poet—a poet, it must be added, of the pleasantly conventional, transition type. But the Civil War was to disturb his mild fantasies. He went to the front and saw active service under General Hunter. He became private secretary to Lincoln, then major and assistant adjutant-general under General Gilmore, then a colonel by brevet, then secretary of the Legation at Paris, *chargé d'affaires* at Vienna and Secretary of Legation at Madrid.

His few vivid *Pike County Ballads* came more as a happy accident than as a deliberate creative effort. When Hay returned from Spain in 1870, bringing with him his *Castilian Days*, he still had visions of becoming an orthodox lyric poet. But he found every one reading Bret Harte's short stories and the new expression of the rude West. (See Preface.) He speculated upon the possibility of doing something similar, translating the characters into poetry. The result was the six racy ballads in a vein utterly different from everything Hay wrote before or after. The poet-politician seems to have regarded this series somewhat in the nature of light, extempore verse, belonging to a far lower plane than his serious publications; he talked about them reluctantly; he even hoped that these "diversions" would be forgotten. It is difficult to say whether this regret grew because Hay, loving the refinements of culture, at heart hated any suggestion of vulgarity, or because of a basic lack of courage—Hay having published his novel of labor unrest in the early 80's (*The Breadwinners*) anonymously, refusing to acknowledge the authorship for years.

The fact remains, his rhymes of Pike County have survived all his more "classical" lines. They served for a time as a fresh influence; they remain a creative accomplishment. "Banty Tim" is quoted not only for its own sake, but as an interesting anticipation of Kipling's "Gunga Din"; "Jim Bludso" was the first of a long line of dramatic "recitations."

Hay was in politics all the later part of his life, ranking as one of the most brilliant Secretaries of State the country has ever had. Under President Hayes he was ambassador to Great Britain. In collaboration with J. G. Nicolay he wrote a most authoritative and vivid life of Lincoln, a biography which was unequaled until Carl Sandburg's two volumes. He died in 1905.

JIM BLUDSO

OF THE PRAIRIE BELLE

Wall, no! I can't tell whar he lives,
Becase he don't live, you see;
Leastways, he's got out of the habit
Of livin' like you and me.
Whar have you been for the last three year
That you haven't heard folks tell
How Jimmy Bludso passed in his checks
The night of the Prairie Belle?

He warn't no saint,—them engineers
Is all pretty much alike,—
One wife in Natchez-under-the-Hill
And another one here, in Pike;
A keerless man in his talk was Jim,
And an awkward hand in a row,
But he never flunked, and he never lied,—
I reckon he never knowed how.

And this was all the religion he had:
To treat his engine well;
Never be passed on the river;
To mind the pilot's bell;
And if ever the Prairie Belle took fire,
A thousand times he swore,
He'd hold her nozzle agin the bank
Till the last soul got ashore.

All boats has their day on the Mississip,
  And her day come at last,—
The Movastar was a better boat,
  But the Belle she *wouldn't* be passed.
And so she came tearin' along that night—
  The oldest craft on the line—
With a nigger squat on her safety-valve,
  And her furnace crammed, rosin and pine.

The fire bust out as she clar'd the bar,
  And burnt a hole in the night,
And quick as a flash she turned and made
  For that willer-bank on the right.
Thar was runnin' and cussin', but Jim yelled out,
  Over all the infernal roar,
"I'll hold her nozzle agin the bank
  Till the last galoot's ashore."

Through the hot, black breath of the burnin' boat
  Jim Bludso's voice was heard,
And they all had trust in his cussedness,
  And knowed he would keep his word.
And, sure's you're born, they all got off
  Afore the smokestacks fell,—
And Bludso's ghost went up alone
  In the smoke of the Prairie Belle.

He warn't no saint,—but at jedgement
  I'd run my chance with Jim,
'Longside of some pious gentlemen
  That wouldn't shook hands with him.
He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,—
  And went for it thar and then;
And Christ ain't a-goin' to be too hard
  On a man that died for men.

BANTY TIM

(*Remarks of Sergeant Tilmon Joy to the White Man's Committee of Spunky Point, Illinois*)

I reckon I git your drift, gents,—
  You 'low the boy sha'n't stay;

This is a white man's country;
  You're Dimocrats, you say;
And whereas, and seein', and wherefore,
  The times bein' all out o' j'int,
The nigger has got to mosey
  From the limits o' Spunky P'int!

Let's reason the thing a minute:
  I'm an old-fashioned Dimocrat too,
Though I laid my politics out o' the way
  For to keep till the war was through.
But I come back here, allowin'
  To vote as I used to do,
Though it gravels me like the devil to train
  Along o' sich fools as you.

Now dog my cats ef I kin see,
  In all the light of the day,
What you've got to do with the question
  Ef Tim shill go or stay.
And furder than that I give notice,
  Ef one of you tetches the boy,
He kin check his trunks to a warmer clime
  Than he'll find in Illanoy.

Why, blame your hearts, jest hear me!
  You know that ungodly day
When our left struck Vicksburg Heights, how ripped
  And torn and tattered we lay.
When the rest retreated I stayed behind,
  Fur reasons sufficient to me,—
With a rib caved in, and a leg on a strike,
  I sprawled on that damned glacee.

Lord! how the hot sun went for us,
  And br'iled and blistered and burned!
How the Rebel bullets whizzed round us
  When a cuss in his death-grip turned!
Till along toward dusk I seen a thing
  I couldn't believe for a spell:
That nigger—that Tim—was a-crawlin' to me
  Through that fire-proof, gilt-edged hell!

The Rebels seen him as quick as me,
And the bullets buzzed like bees;
But he jumped for me, and shouldered me,
Though a shot brought him once to his knees;
But he staggered up, and packed me off,
With a dozen stumbles and falls,
Till safe in our lines he drapped us both,
His black hide riddled with balls.

So, my gentle gazelles, thar's my answer,
And here stays Banty Tim:
He trumped Death's ace for me that day,
And I'm not goin' back on him!
You may rezoloot till the cows come home,
But ef one of you tetches the boy,
He'll wrastle his hash tonight in hell,
Or my name's not Tilmon Joy!

JAMES RYDER RANDALL

James Ryder Randall was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1839. He was a student at Georgetown University at Washington, D. C., and later engaged in journalism through the South. While in Louisiana, at the time of the Civil War, he composed "Maryland, My Maryland" which was adopted as a battle-hymn and was second in favor only to "Dixie."

Although he wrote chiefly in the 1860's, it was not until 1908 that his first volume was collected and issued under the title of *Maryland, My Maryland and Other Poems.* Two years after his death (in Augusta, Georgia, on January 15, 1908) a volume, *The Poems of James Ryder Randall* (1910) was edited with an Introduction by Matthew Page Andrews. Randall's name is unknown today, and his impassioned lyric is the one poem of his which, in spite of over-excitation and shrieking rhetoric, has survived.

MY MARYLAND

The despot's heel is on thy shore,
Maryland!
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland!

Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore,
And be the battle-queen of yore,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Hark to an exiled son's appeal,
Maryland!
My Mother State, to thee I kneel,
Maryland!
For life and death, for woe and weal,
Thy peerless chivalry reveal,
And gird thy beauteous limbs with steel,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Thou wilt not cower in the dust,
Maryland!
Thy beaming sword shall never rust,
Maryland!
Remember Carroll's sacred trust,
Remember Howard's warlike thrust,
And all thy slumbers with the just,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Come! For thy shield is bright and strong,
Maryland!
Come! For thy dalliance does thee wrong,
Maryland!
Come to thine own heroic throng
Stalking with Liberty along,
And chant thy dauntless slogan-song,
Maryland, my Maryland!

I see the blush upon thy cheek,
Maryland!
For thou wast ever bravely meek,
Maryland!
But lo! there surges forth a shriek,
From hill to hill, from creek to creek,
Potomac calls to Chesapeake,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Thou wilt not yield the Vandal toll,
Maryland!
Thou wilt not crook to his control,
Maryland!
Better the fire upon thee roll,
Better the shot, the blade, the bowl,
Than crucifixion of the soul,
Maryland, my Maryland!

I hear the distant thunder hum,
Maryland!
The Old Line's bugle, fife and drum,
Maryland!
She is not dead, nor deaf, nor dumb;
Huzza! she spurns the Northern scum!
She breathes! She burns! She'll come!
She'll come!
Maryland, my Maryland!

BRET HARTE

Francis Bret Harte was born August 25, 1839, at Albany, New York. (In certain quarters doubt is thrown on the date of his birth. One or two sources maintain that a compositor, upsetting a 6, made the "correct" date, 1836, "wrongly" 1839. However, practically all of the encyclopedias and biographies agree upon 1839 as authentic.) His childhood was spent in various cities of the East. Late in 1853 his widowed mother went to California with a party of relatives, and two months later, when he was fifteen, Bret Harte and his sister followed. During the next few years he was engaged in school-teaching, typesetting, politics, mining and journalism, becoming editor of *The Overland Monthly* in San Francisco in 1868.

Harte's fame came suddenly. Late in the Sixties he had written a burlesque in rhyme of two Western gamblers trying to fleece a guileless Chinaman who claimed to know nothing about cards, but who, it turned out, was scarcely as innocent as he appeared. Harte, in the midst of writing serious poetry, had put the verses aside as too crude and trifling for publication. Some time later, just as *The Overland Monthly* was going to press, it was discovered that the form was one page short. Having nothing else on hand, Harte had these rhymes set up. Instead of passing unnoticed, the poem was quoted everywhere; it swept the West and captivated the East. When *The Luck of Roaring Camp* followed, Harte became not only a national but an international figure. England acclaimed him and *The Atlantic Monthly* paid him $10,000 to write for a year in his Pike County vein.

East and West Poems appeared in 1871; in 1872 Harte published an enlarged *Political Works* including many earlier pieces. His scores of short stories represent Harte at his best; "M'liss," "Tennessee's Partner," "The Outcast of Poker Flat"—these are the work of a lesser, transplanted Dickens. His novels (*Maruja* was published in 1885) are of minor importance; they are carelessly constructed, theatrically conceived, his characters being no more than badly wired marionettes that betray their manipulator with every movement.

His serious poetry has many of the faults of his prose. A melodramatic crudeness alternates with an equally exaggerated sentimentalism; even those verses not in dialect (like "What the Bullet Sang") suffer from defects of emphasis. But the occasional verse will remain to delight readers who rarely glance at Harte's other work except for documentation.

In 1872 Harte, encouraged by his success, returned to his native East; in 1878 he went to Germany as consul at Crefeld. Two years later he was transferred to Scotland and, after five years there, went to London, where he remained the rest of his life. Harte's later period remains mysteriously shrouded. He never came back to America, not even for a visit; he ceased to correspond with his family; he separated himself from all the most intimate associations of his early life. He died, suddenly, at Camberley, England, May 6, 1902.

"JIM"

Say there! P'r'aps
Some on you chaps
  Might know Jim Wild?
Well,—no offense:
Thar ain't no sense
  In gittin' riled!

Jim was my chum
  Up on the Bar:
That's why I come
  Down from up yar,

Lookin' for Jim.
Thank ye, sir! *You*
Ain't of that crew,—
  Blest if you are!

Money? Not much:
  That ain't my kind;
I ain't no such.
  Rum? I don't mind,
Seein' it's you.

Well, this yer Jim,—
Did you know him?
Jes' 'bout your size;
Same kind of eyes;—
Well, that is strange:
  Why, it's two year
  Since he came here,
Sick, for a change.

Well, here's to us:
      Eh?
The h—— you say!
      Dead?
That little cuss?

What makes you star',
You over thar?
Can't a man drop
's glass in yer shop
But you must r'ar?
  It wouldn't take
  D—d much to break
You and your bar.

      Dead!
Poor—little—Jim!
Why, thar was me,
Jones, and Bob Lee,
Harry and Ben,—
No-account men:
Then to take *him!*

Well, thar—Good-by.
No more, sir—I—
        Eh?
What's that you say?
Why, dern it!—sho!—
No? Yes! By Joe!
        Sold!
Sold! Why, you limb.
You ornery,
   Derned, old,
Long-legged Jim.

PLAIN LANGUAGE FROM TRUTHFUL JAMES

(*Table Mountain, 1870*)

Which I wish to remark,
   And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
   And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
   Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name;
   And I shall not deny,
In regard to the same,
   What that name might imply;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
   As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third,
   And quite soft was the skies;
Which it might be inferred
   That Ah Sin was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
   And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
   And Ah Sin took a hand:
It was Euchre. The same
   He did not understand;
But he smiled as he sat by the table,
   With a smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked
  In a way that I grieve,
And my feelings were shocked
  At the state of Nye's sleeve,
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
  And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played
  By that heathen Chinee,
And the points that he made,
  Were quite frightful to see,—
Till at last he put down a right bower,
  Which the same Nye had dealt unto me!

Then I looked up at Nye,
  And he gazed upon me;
And he rose with a sigh,
  And said, "Can this be?
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,"—
  And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued
  I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed
  Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
  In the game "he did not understand."

In his sleeves, which were long,
  He has twenty-four packs,—
Which was coming it strong,
  Yet I state but the facts;
And we found on his nails, which were taper,
  What is frequent in tapers,—that's wax.

Which is why I remark,
  And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
  And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—
  Which the same I am free to maintain.

WHAT THE BULLET SANG

O joy of creation,
To be!
O rapture, to fly
And be free!
Be the battle lost or won,
Though the smoke shall hide the sun,
I shall find my love, the one
Born for me!

I shall know him where he stands
All alone,
With the power in his hands
Not o'erthrown;
I shall know him by his face,
By his godlike front and grace;
I shall hold him for a space
All my own!

It is he—O my love!
So bold!
It is I—all thy love
Foretold!
It is I—O love, what bliss!
Dost thou answer to my kiss?
O sweetheart! what is this
Lieth there so cold?

THE AGED STRANGER

(*An Incident of the Civil War*)

"I was with Grant"—the stranger said;
Said the farmer, "Say no more,
But rest thee here at my cottage porch,
For thy feet are weary and sore."

"I was with Grant"—the stranger said;
Said the farmer, "Nay, no more.
I prithee sit at my frugal board,
And eat of my humble store.

"How fares my boy,—my soldier boy,
Of the old Ninth Army Corps?
I warrant he bore him gallantly
In the smoke and the battle's roar!"

"I know him not," said the aged man,
"And, as I remarked before,
I was with Grant"—"Nay, nay, I know,"
Said the farmer, "say no more.

"He fell in battle,—I see, alas!
Thou'dst smooth these tidings o'er.
Nay, speak the truth, whatever it be,
Though it rend my bosom's core."

"I cannot tell," said the aged man,
"And should have remarked before,
That I was with Grant,—in Illinois,—
Three years before the war."

Then the farmer spake him never a word,
But beat with his fist full sore
That aged man, who had worked for Grant
Three years before the war.

JOAQUIN MILLER

Joaquin Miller was, as he desired to be, a mysterious figure. The date of his birth is conjectural; even his name is a matter of doubt. However, from recent evidence—particularly the researches of Frank R. Reade—it seems safe to say that his name was originally Cincinnatus Hiner Miller: Cincinnatus, according to his brother, "for a certain Roman General (!) and mother named him Hiner for Dr. Hiner, who brought him into the world." Although Joaquin Miller claimed that his middle name was "Heine" and that his mother named him Heine because of her love for the German poet, there is proof that Miller adopted the Heine *after* he had heard of the famous author of *Buch der Lieder*. The date of his birth is also disputed. March tenth seems to be the favored day assigned to his entry into the world and, although 1839 has been advanced as the latest "definite" date, most biographers choose 1841 as the year in which Miller was born.

A few facts are indisputable. Miller was of mixed Dutch and Scotch stock—not, as has been asserted, of immigrant parents—his father's father having been killed at Fort Meigs in the War of 1812. As Miller himself wrote (and this particular bit of biography has stood the scrutiny of his more exact commentators), "My cradle was a covered wagon, pointed west. I was born in a covered wagon, I am told, at or about the time it crossed the line dividing Indiana from Ohio." When Miller was twelve, his family left the mid-West with "two big heavily laden wagons, with eight yoke of oxen to each, a carriage and two horses for mother and baby sister, and a single horse for the three boys to ride." The distance covered in their cross-country exodus (they took a roundabout route to Oregon) was nearly three thousand miles. The time consumed, he records, "was seven months and five days. There were no bridges, no railroad levels, nothing of the sort. . . . Many times, at night, after ascending a stream to find a ford, we could look back and see our smoldering campfires of the day before." This journey made a lasting impression on the boy's impressionable mind; it was this tortuous wandering that gave Miller his reverence for the West in general and the pioneer in particular. After two years in the Oregon home, he ran away to find gold.

At fifteen we find Miller living with the Indians as one of them; in 1859 (at the age of eighteen) he attends a mission-school "college" in Eugene, Oregon; between 1860 and 1865 he is express-messenger, editor of a pacifist newspaper that is suppressed for opposing the Civil War, lawyer and, occasionally, a poet. He holds a minor judgeship from 1866 to 1870.

His first book (*Specimens*) appears in 1868, his second (*Joaquin et al.*, from which he took his name) in 1869. No response—not even from "the bards of San Francisco Bay" to whom he had dedicated the latter volume. He is chagrined, discouraged, angry. He resolves to quit America, to go to the land that has always been the nursing-ground of poets. "Three months later, September 1, 1870, I was kneeling at the grave of Burns. I really expected to die there in the land of my fathers." He arrives in London, unheralded, unknown. He takes his manuscripts to one publisher after another with the same negative result. Finally, with a pioneer desperation, he prints privately one hundred copies of his *Pacific Poems*, sending them out for review. Sensation! The reversal of Miller's fortunes is one of the most startling in all literature. The reviews are a series of superlatives, the personal tributes still more fervid. He becomes famous overnight. He is fêted, lauded, lionized; he is ranked as an equal of Browning, given a dinner by the Pre-Raphaelites, acclaimed as "the great interpreter of America," "the Byron of Oregon!"

His dramatic success in England is easily explained. He brought to the calm air of literary London, a breath of the great winds of the plain. The more he exaggerated his crashing effects, the louder he roared, the better the English public liked it. When he entered Victorian parlors in his velvet jacket, hip-boots and flowing hair, childhood visions of the "wild and woolly Westerner" were realized and the very bombast of his work was glorified as "typically American."

And yet, for all his overstressed muscularity, Miller is strangely lacking in creative energy. His whipped-up rhetoric cannot disguise the essential weakness of his verse. It is, in spite of a certain breeziness and a few magnificent descriptions of cañons and mountain-chains, feeble as well as false, full of cheap heroics, atrocious taste, impossible men and women. (See Preface.) One or two individual poems, like "Crossing the Plains," "The Yukon," and parts of his apostrophes to the Sierras, the Pacific Ocean and the Missouri River may live; the rest seem doomed to extinction.

From 1872 to 1876 Miller traveled in Europe and the Holy Land, and, although he speaks of being in Egypt in 1879, there is good ground for believing this to be another romantic exaggeration. At all events, he built a log cabin in Washington in 1883, after spending some time in Boston and New York. After being married for the third time, he returned to California in 1885. In 1886 he bought "The Hights" and tried to found an experimental Greek Academy for aspiring writers. He died there, after a determinedly picturesque life, in sight of the Golden Gate in 1913.

BY THE PACIFIC OCEAN[1]

Here room and kingly silence keep
Companionship in state austere;
The dignity of death is here,
The large, lone vastness of the deep.
Here toil has pitched his camp to rest:
The west is banked against the west.

Above yon gleaming skies of gold
One lone imperial peak is seen;
While gathered at his feet in green
Ten thousand foresters are told.
And all so still! so still the air
That duty drops the web of care.

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[1] Permission to reprint the poems of Joaquin Miller was granted by the Harr Wagner Publishing Co., San Francisco, California, publishers of *Joaquin Miller's Complete Poetical Works.*

Beneath the sunset's golden sheaves
The awful deep walks with the deep,
Where silent sea-doves slip and sweep,
And commerce keeps her loom and weaves.
The dead red men refuse to rest;
Their ghosts illume my lurid West.

CROSSING THE PLAINS

What great yoked brutes with briskets low,
With wrinkled necks like buffalo,
With round, brown, liquid, pleading eyes,
That turn'd so slow and sad to you.
That shone like love's eyes soft with tears,
That seem'd to plead, and make replies,
The while they bow'd their necks and drew
The creaking load; and looked at you.
Their sable briskets swept the ground,
Their cloven feet kept solemn sound.

Two sullen bullocks led the line,
Their great eyes shining bright like wine;
Two sullen captive kings were they,
That had in time held herds at bay,
And even now they crush'd the sod
With stolid sense of majesty,
And stately stepp'd and stately trod,
As if 'twere something still to be
Kings even in captivity.

FROM "BYRON"

In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still,
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I do not dare to draw a line
Between the two, where God has not.

THE ARCTIC MOON

(*From "The Yukon"*)

The moon resumed all heaven now,
She shepherded the stars below
Along her wide, white steeps of snow,
Nor stooped nor rested, where or how.
She bared her full white breast, she dared
The sun to show his face again.
She seemed to know no change, she kept
Carousal constantly, nor slept,
Nor turned aside a breath, nor spared
The fearful meaning, the mad pain,
The weary eyes, the poor dazed brain,
That came at last to feel, to see
The dread, dead touch of lunacy.

How loud the silence! Oh, how loud!
How more than beautiful the shroud
Of dead Light in the moon-mad north
When great torch-tipping stars stand forth
Above the black, slow-moving pall
As at some fearful funeral!

The moon blares as mad trumpets blare
To marshaled warriors long and loud;
The cobalt blue knows not a cloud,
But, oh, beware that moon, beware
Her ghostly, graveyard, moon-mad stare!
Beware white silence more than white!
Beware the five-horned starry rune;
Beware the groaning gorge below;
Beware the wide, white world of snow,
Where trees hang white as hooded nun—
No thing not white, not one, not one!
But most beware that mad white moon.

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

Edward Rowland Sill was born at Windsor, Connecticut, in 1841. In 1861 he was graduated from Yale and shortly thereafter his poor health compelled him to go West. After various unsuccessful experiments, he drifted into teaching, first in the high schools in Ohio, later in the English department of the University of California. His uncertain physical condition added to his mental uncertainty. Unable to ally himself either with the lethargic, conservative forces whom he hated or with the radicals whom he distrusted, Sill became an uncomfortable solitary; half rebellious, half resigned. During the last decade of his life, his brooding seriousness was less pronounced, a lighter irony took the place of his dark reflections. Although Sill remains among the minor poets both in scope and style, a few of his poems (such as "The Fool's Prayer" and "Opportunity") have established themselves securely; they will keep Sill's name alive for many years.

The Hermitage, his first volume, was published in 1867, a later edition (including later poems) appearing in 1889. His two posthumous books are *Poems* (1887) and *Hermione and Other Poems* (1899). A volume of his prose "essays in literature and education" was published in 1900. His later and little known work deserved—and deserves—a wider audience. It established a serenity that was not without flashes of spirit, a gravity compounded with quiet wit.

Sill died, after bringing something of the Eastern culture to the West, in 1887.

OPPORTUNITY

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:—
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge,
And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the king's son bears,—but this
Blunt thing—!" he snapt, and flung it from his hand,
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

SOLITUDE

All alone—alone,
Calm, as on a kingly throne,
Take thy place in the crowded land,
Self-centered in free self-command.
Let thy manhood leave behind
The narrow ways of the lesser mind:
What to thee are its little cares,
The feeble love or the spite it bears?
Let the noisy crowd go by:
In thy lonely watch on high,
Far from the chattering tongues of men,
Sitting above their call or ken
Free from links of manner and form
Thou shalt learn of the wingèd storm—
God shall speak to thee out of the sky.

DARE YOU?

Doubting Thomas and loving John,
Behind the others walking on:—

"Tell me now, John, dare you be
One of the minority?
To be lonely in your thought,
Never visited nor sought,
Shunned with secret shrug, to go
Thro' the world, esteemed its foe:
To be singled out and hissed,
Pointed at as one unblessed,
Warned against in whispers faint,
Lest the children catch a taint;
To bear off your titles well,—
Heretic and infidel?
If you dare, come now with me,
Fearless, confident, and free."

"Thomas, do you dare to be
Of the great majority?
To be only, as the rest,
With Heaven's creature comforts blessed;

To accept, in humble part,
Truth that shines on every heart;
Never to be set on high,
Where the envious curses fly;
Never name or fame to find,
Still outstripped in soul and mind;
To be hid, unless to God,
As one grass-blade in the sod,
Underfoot with millions trod?
If you dare, come with us, be
Lost in love's great unity."

THE FOOL'S PRAYER

The royal feast was done; the King
  Sought some new sport to banish care,
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,
  Kneel now, and make for us a prayer!"

The jester doffed his cap and bells,
  And stood the mocking court before;
They could not see the bitter smile
  Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head, and bent his knee
  Upon the monarch's silken stool;
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,
  Be merciful to me, a fool!

" 'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
  Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
'Tis by our follies that so long
  We hold the earth from heaven away.

"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
  Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
  Among the heart-strings of a friend.

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept—
  Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had not sense to say—
  Who knows how grandly it had rung?

"Our faults no tenderness should ask,
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;
But for our blunders—oh, in shame
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

"Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;
Men crown the knave, and scourge the tool
That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

The room was hushed; in silence rose
The King, and sought his gardens cool,
And walked apart, and murmured low,
"Be merciful to me, a fool!"

SIDNEY LANIER

Sidney Lanier was born at Macon, Georgia, February 3, 1842. His was a family of musicians (Lanier himself was a skillful performer on various instruments), and it is not surprising that his verse emphasizes—even overstresses—the influence of music on poetry. He attended Oglethorpe College, graduating at the age of eighteen (1860), and, a year later, volunteered as a private in the Confederate army. After several months' imprisonment (he had been captured while acting as signal officer on a blockade-runner), Lanier was released in February, 1865, returning from Point Lookout to Georgia on foot, accompanied only by his flute. His physical health, never the most robust, had been further impaired by his incarceration, and he was already suffering from tuberculosis, the rest of his life being spent in an unequal struggle against it.

He was now only twenty-three years old and the problem of choosing a vocation was complicated by his marriage in 1867. He spent five years in the study and practice of law, during which time he wrote comparatively little verse. But the law could not hold him; he felt premonitions of death and realized he must devote his talents to art before it was too late. He was fortunate enough to obtain a position as flautist with the Peabody Symphony Orchestra in 1873 in Baltimore, where he had free access to the music and literature he craved. Here he wrote all his best poetry. In 1879, he was made lecturer on English in Johns Hopkins University, and it was for his courses there that he wrote his chief prose work, a brilliant if inconclusive study, *The Science* *of English Verse.* Besides his poetry, he wrote several books for boys, the two most popular being *The Boys' Froissart* (1878) and *The Boys' King Arthur* (1880).

Lanier's poetry suffers from his all too frequent theorizing, his too-conscious effort to bring verse over into the province of pure music. He thought almost entirely in terms of musical form. His main theory that English verse has for its essential basis not *accent* but a strict musical *quantity* is a wholly erroneous conclusion, possible only to one who could write "whatever turn I have for art is purely musical—poetry being with me a mere tangent into which I shoot." Lanier is at his best in his ballads, although a few of his lyrics have a similar spontaneity. In spite of the fact that he had novel schemes of rhythm and stanza-structure, much of his work is marred by strained effects, literary conceits (especially his use of pseudo-Shakespearean images) and a kind of verse that approaches mere pattern-making. But such a ballad as "The Song of the Chattahoochee," lyrics like "Night and Day," and parts of the symphonic "Hymns of the Marshes" have won a place in American literature. His triumphs over the exigencies of disease and his accomplishments in two self-tutored arts were the result of undefeated spirit, a bravery that dazzled his commentators who confused the attainments of courage with those of creation. Never a great figure, Lanier was one of the more interesting of our minor poets.

A comprehensive collection of Lanier's verse was first issued in 1906: *Collected Poems of Sidney Lanier,* edited by his wife, with a memorial by William Hayes Ward. It includes not only the poet's well-known musical experiments, but the rarely printed dialect verses and all that remains of "The Jacquerie."

Lanier died, a victim of his disease, in the mountains of North Carolina, September 7, 1881.

SONG OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE[1]

Out of the hills of Habersham,
Down the valleys of Hall,
I hurry amain to reach the plain,
Run the rapid and leap the fall,
Split at the rock and together again,
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,
And flee from folly on every side
With a lover's pain to attain the plain

---

[1] All of Lanier's lines are reprinted from *Poems of Sidney Lanier.* Copyright, 1884, 1891, 1916, by Mary D. Lanier, published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Far from the hills of Habersham,
Far from the valleys of Hall.

All down the hills of Habersham,
All through the valleys of Hall,
The rushes cried *Abide, abide,*
The willful waterweeds held me thrall,
The laving laurel turned my tide,
The ferns and the fondling grass said *Stay,*
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,
And the little reeds sighed *Abide, abide,*
Here in the hills of Habersham,
Here in the valleys of Hall.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,
Veiling the valleys of Hall,
The hickory told me manifold
Fair tales of shade, the poplar tall
Wrought me her shadowy self to hold,
The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,
Overleaning, with flickering meaning and sign,
Said, *Pass not, so cold, these manifold*
Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,
These glades in the valleys of Hall.

And oft in the hills of Habersham,
And oft in the valleys of Hall,
The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-stone
Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,
And many a luminous jewel lone
—Crystals clear or acloud with mist,
Ruby, garnet and amethyst—
Made lures with the lights of streaming stone
In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,
In the beds of the valleys of Hall.

But oh, not the hills of Habersham,
And oh, not the valleys of Hall
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.
Downward the voices of Duty call—
Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,

The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,
And the lordly main from beyond the plain
  Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,
  Calls through the valleys of Hall.

NIGHT AND DAY

The innocent, sweet Day is dead.
Dark Night hath slain her in her bed.
O, Moors are as fierce to kill as to wed!
  —Put out the light, said he.

A sweeter light than ever rayed
From star of heaven or eye of maid
Has vanished in the unknown Shade
  —She's dead, she's dead, said he.

Now, in a wild, sad after-mood
The tawny Night sits still to brood
Upon the dawn-time when he wooed
  —I would she lived, said he.

Star-memories of happier times,
Of loving deeds and lovers' rhymes,
Throng forth in silvery pantomimes.
  —Come back, O Day! said he.

FROM "THE MARSHES OF GLYNN"

Inward and outward to northward and southward the beach-lines linger and curl
As a silver-wrought garment clings to and follows the firm sweet limbs of a girl.
Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into sight,
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray looping of light.
And what if behind me to westward the wall of the woods stands high?
The world lies east: how ample, the marsh and the sea and the sky!

A league and a league of marsh-grass, waist-high, broad in the blade,
Green, and all of a height, and unflecked with a light or a shade,
Stretch leisurely off, in a pleasant plain,
To the terminal blue of the main.

. . . .

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-withholding and free
Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer yourselves to the sea!
Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains and the sun,
Ye spread and span like the catholic man who hath mightily won
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain
And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain.

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God:
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.

And the sea lends large, as the marsh: lo, out of his plenty the sea
Pours fast: full soon the time of the flood-tide must be:
Look how the grace of the sea doth go
About and about through the intricate channels that flow
Here and there,
Everywhere,
Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks and the low-lying lanes,
And the marsh is meshed with a million veins,
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow
In the rose-and-silver evening glow.

Farewell, my lord Sun!
The creeks overflow: a thousand rivulets run
'Twixt the roots of the sod; the blades of the marsh-grass stir;
Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that westward whirr;
Passeth, and all is still; and the currents cease to run;
And the sea and the marsh are one.
How still the plains of the waters be!
The tide in his ecstasy.
The tide is at his highest height:
And it is night.

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the waters of sleep
Roll in on the souls of men,
But who will reveal to our waking ken
The forms that swim and the shapes that creep
Under the waters of sleep?
And I would I could know what swimmeth below when the tide comes in
On the length and breadth of the marvelous marshes of Glynn.

SONG FOR "THE JACQUERIE"

The hound was cuffed, the hound was kicked,
O' the ears was cropped, o' the tail was nicked,
(*All.*) Oo-hoo-o, *howled the hound.*
The hound into his kennel crept;
He rarely wept, he never slept.
His mouth he always open kept
Licking his bitter wound,
The hound,
(*All.*) U-lu-lo, *howled the hound.*

A star upon his kennel shone
That showed the hound a meat-bare bone.
(*All.*) O hungry was the hound!
The hound had but a churlish wit.
He seized the bone, he crunched, he bit.
"An thou wert Master, I had slit
Thy throat with a huge wound,"
Quo' hound.
(*All.*) O, angry was the hound.

The star in castle-window shone,
The Master lay abed, alone.
(*All.*) Oh ho, why not? quo' hound.
He leapt, he seized the throat, he tore
The Master, head from neck, to floor,
And rolled the head i' the kennel door,
And fled and salved his wound,
Good hound!
(*All.*) U-lu-lo, *howled the hound.*

A BALLAD OF THE TREES AND THE MASTER

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him:
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came.

CHARLES EDWARD CARRYL

Charles Edward Carryl, father of Guy Wetmore Carryl (see page 211), was born in New York City, December 30, 1842. He was an officer and director in various railroads but found leisure to write two of the few rivals of the immortal *Alice in Wonderland.* These two, *Davy and the Goblin* (1884), which has gone through twenty printings, and *The Admiral's Caravan* (1891), contain many lively and diverting ballads. But the best of the elder Carryl is neither his twinkling prose nor his semi-narrative stanzas but the mock monologues and the inspired nonsense verses in the manner of Lewis Carroll who, due to the slight difference in spelling, is sometimes confused with him.

C. E. Carryl lived the greater part of his life in New York, but on retiring from business, removed to Boston and lived there until his death, which occurred in the summer of 1920.

THE PLAINT OF THE CAMEL

"Canary-birds feed on sugar and seed,
Parrots have crackers to crunch;
And as for the poodles, they tell me the noodles
Have chickens and cream for their lunch.
But there's never a question
About MY digestion—
ANYTHING does for me!

"Cats, you're aware, can repose in a chair,
Chickens can roost upon rails;
Puppies are able to sleep in a stable,
And oysters can slumber in pails.
But no one supposes
A poor Camel dozes—
ANY PLACE does for me!

"Lambs are enclosed where it's never exposed,
Coops are constructed for hens;
Kittens are treated to houses well heated,
And pigs are protected by pens.
But a Camel comes handy
Wherever it's sandy—
ANYWHERE does for me!

"People would laugh if you rode a giraffe,
Or mounted the back of an ox;
It's nobody's habit to ride on a rabbit,
Or try to bestraddle a fox.
But as for a Camel, he's
Ridden by families—
ANY LOAD does for me!

"A snake is as round as a hole in the ground;
Weasels are wavy and sleek;
And no alligator could ever be straighter
Than lizards that live in a creek.

But a Camel's all lumpy
And bumpy and humpy—
ANY SHAPE does for me!"

ROBINSON CRUSOE'S STORY

The night was thick and hazy
When the "Piccadilly Daisy"
Carried down the crew and captain in the sea;
And I think the water drowned 'em;
For they never, never found 'em
And I know they didn't come ashore with me.

Oh! 'twas very sad and lonely
When I found myself the only
Population on this cultivated shore;
But I've made a little tavern
In a rocky little cavern,
And I sit and watch for people at the door.

I spent no time in looking
For a girl to do my cooking,
As I'm quite a clever hand at making stews;
But I had that fellow Friday,
Just to keep the tavern tidy,
And to put a Sunday polish on my shoes.

I have a little garden
That I'm cultivating lard in,
As the things I eat are rather tough and dry;
For I live on toasted lizards,
Prickly pears, and parrot gizzards,
And I'm really very fond of beetle-pie.

The clothes I had were furry,
And it made me fret and worry
When I found the moths were eating off the hair;
And I had to scrape and sand 'em,
And I boiled 'em and I tanned 'em,
Till I got the fine morocco suit I wear.

I sometimes seek diversion
In a family excursion
With the few domestic animals you see;
And we take along a carrot
As refreshment for the parrot,
And a little can of jungleberry tea.

Then we gather as we travel,
Bits of moss and dirty gravel,
And we chip off little specimens of stone;
And we carry home as prizes
Funny bugs, of handy sizes,
Just to give the day a scientific tone.

If the roads are wet and muddy
We remain at home and study,—
For the Goat is very clever at a sum,—
And the Dog, instead of fighting,
Studies ornamental writing,
While the Cat is taking lessons on the drum.

We retire at eleven,
And we rise again at seven;
And I wish to call attention, as I close,
To the fact that all the scholars,
Are correct about their collars,
And particular in turning out their toes.

LLOYD MIFFLIN

Lloyd Mifflin was born in Columbia, Pennsylvania, September 15, 1846, the son of Houston Mifflin, the portrait painter. He himself was an artist, but was forced to abandon painting in 1877 on account of poor health. After that date he devoted himself entirely to literary work, publishing six volumes of poems, the most interesting of them being *At the Gates of Song* (1897) and *The Fields of Dawn* (1900). He died in 1921.

Much of Mifflin's verse is doomed to extinction; in fact, most of it has already died. He wrote entirely in the poetic diction of his day, in a rolling rhetoric with which we today are wholly out of touch and sympathy. In the amassing of grandiose terms and the piling up of metaphors, Mifflin was the forerunner of George Sterling and other poets of his persuasion. Yet, for all the faults of exaggeration and gaudiness of structure, some of Mifflin's sonnets attain a vague splendor. "The Harvest Waits" is one of these —a neglected poem in which the startling imagery fulfills and even amplifies the large conception.

SESOSTRIS

Sole Lord of Lords and very King of Kings,
He sits within the desert, carved in stone;
Inscrutable, colossal, and alone,
And ancienter than memory of things.
Graved on his front the sacred beetle clings;
Disdain sits on his lips; and in a frown
Scorn lives upon his forehead for a crown.
The affrighted ostrich dare not dust her wings
Anear this Presence. The long caravan's
Dazed camels stop, and mute the Bedouins stare.
This symbol of past power more than man's
Presages doom. Kings look—and Kings despair:
Their scepters tremble in their jeweled hands,
And dark thrones totter in the baleful air!

"THE HARVEST WAITS"

God hath been patient long. In eons past
He plowed the waste of Chaos. He hath sown
The furrows with His worlds, and from His throne
Showered, like grain, planets upon the Vast.
What meed of glory hath He from the past?
Shall He not reap, who hears but prayer and groan?
The harvest waits. . . . He cometh to His own,—
He who shall scythe the starry host at last.
When the accumulated swarms of Death
Glut the rank worlds as rills are choked by leaves,
Then shall God flail the million orbs, as sheaves
Unfruitful gleaned; and, in His age sublime,
Winnow the gathered stars, and with a breath
Whirl the spurned chaff adown the void of Time!

James Whitcomb Riley, who was possibly the most widely read native poet of his day, was born October 7, 1849, in Greenfield, Indiana, a small town twenty miles from Indianapolis, where he spent his later years. Contrary to popular belief, Riley was not, as many have gathered from his bucolic poems, a struggling child of the soil; his father was a lawyer in comfortable circumstances and Riley was given not only a good education, but was prepared for the law. His temperament, however, craved something more adventurous. At eighteen he shut the heavy pages of Blackstone, slipped out of the office and joined a traveling troupe of actors who sold patent medicines during the intermissions. Riley's functions were varied: he beat the bass-drum, painted their flaring banners, wrote local versions of old songs, coached the actors and, when occasion arose, took part in the performance himself.

Even before this time, Riley had begun to send verses to the newspapers, young experiments, bits of homely sentiment, simple snatches and elaborate hoaxes—the poem "Leonainie," published over the initials "E. A. P.," being accepted in many quarters as a newly discovered poem by Poe. In 1882, when he was on the staff of the Indianapolis *Journal,* he began the series of dialect poems which he claimed were by a rude and unlettered farmer, one "Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone, the Hoosier poet"—printing long extracts from "Johnson's" ungrammatical and badly spelt letters to prove his find. A collection of these rustic verses appeared, in 1883, as *The Ole Swimmin' Hole;* and Riley leaped into widespread popularity.

Other collections followed rapidly: *Afterwhiles* (1887), *Old-Fashioned Roses* (1888), *Pipes o' Pan at Zekesbury* (1889), *Rhymes of Childhood* (1890). All met an instant response; Riley endeared himself, by his homely idiom and his childlike ingenuity, to a countryful of readers, adolescent and adult.

But Riley's simplicity is seldom as artless as it seems. Time and again, one can watch him trading wantonly on the emotions of his unsophisticated readers. He sees them about to smile—and broadens the point of his joke; he observes them on the point of tears—and pulls out the sobbing *tremolo* stop. In many respects, he is patently the most artificial of those poets who claim to give us the stuff of the soil. He is the poet of obtrusive sentiment rather than of quiet convictions, of lulling assurance, of philosophies that never disturb his readers, of sweet truisms rather than searching truths. His influence has given rise to an entire school of "cheerful philosophy" versifiers; its lowest ebb may be seen in the newspaper columns of the "A Smile a Day" variety and the syndicated sirup of Edgar A. Guest.

That work of his which may endure, will survive because of the personal flavor that Riley often gave it. Such poems as "When the Frost Is on the Punkin," and "The Raggedy Man," seem part of American folk-literature; "Little Orphant Annie" was read wherever there was a schoolhouse or, for that matter, a nursery. In 1912 the schools throughout the country observed his birthday.

Riley died in his little house in Lockerbie Street, Indianapolis, July 22, 1916.

"WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN"[1]

When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
O, it's then the time a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest,
As he leaves the house, bareheaded, and goes out to feed the stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

They's something kindo' harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is here—
Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossoms on the trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the bees;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

The husky, rusty russel of the tossels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves as golden as the morn;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin' sermuns to us of the barns they growed to fill;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead!—
O, it sets my hart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

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[1] From the Biographical Edition of the *Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley*. Copyright, 1913. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Then your apples all is gethered, and the ones a feller keeps
Is poured around the cellar-floor in red and yaller heaps;
And your cider-makin's over, and your wimmern-folks is through
With theyr mince and apple-butter, and theyr souse and sausage too! . . .
I don't know how to tell it—but ef such a thing could be
As the angels wantin' boardin', and they'd call around on *me*—
I'd want to 'commodate 'em—all the whole-indurin' flock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock.

A PARTING GUEST[1]

What delightful hosts are they—
Life and Love!
Lingeringly I turn away,
This late hour, yet glad enough
They have not withheld from me
Their high hospitality.
So, with face lit with delight
And all gratitude, I stay
Yet to press their hands and say,
"Thanks.—So fine a time! Good night."

EUGENE FIELD

Although Eugene Field was born September 2, 1850, in St. Louis, Missouri, his work belongs to the literature of the West. Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region claimed him as their own and Field never repudiated the allegiance; he even called most of his poetry "Western Verse."

Field's area of education embraced New England, Missouri and what European territory he could cover in six months. At twenty-three he became a reporter on the St. Louis *Evening Journal*, the rest of his life being given, with a dogged devotion, to journalism. Driven by the demands of his unique daily columns (those on the Denver *Tribune* [1881-1883] and the Chicago *Daily News* [1883-1895] were widely copied), Field first capitalized and then standardized his high spirits, his erudition, his whimsicality, his fondness for children. He wrote so often with his tongue in his cheek that it is difficult to say where true sentiment stops and where exaggerated sentimentality begins. "Field," says Fred Lewis Pattee, in his detailed study of *American Literature Since 1870*, "more than any other writer of the period, illustrates the way the old type of literary scholar was to be modified and changed by the newspaper. Every scrap of Field's voluminous product was written for immediate newspaper consumption. . . . He was a pioneer in a peculiar province: he stands for the journalization of literature, a process that, if carried to its logical extreme, will make of the man of letters a mere newspaper reporter."

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[1] From the Biographical Edition of the *Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley*. Copyright, 1913. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Though Field was overrated, some of his child lyrics, his homely philosophic ballads (in the vein which Harte and Riley popularized) and his burlesques won him, for the time, a conspicuous place. Readers of all tastes found much to delight them in *A Little Book of Western Verse* (1889), *With Trumpet and Drum* (1892), *A Second Book of Verse* (1893) and those remarkable versions (and perversions) of Horace, *Echoes from the Sabine Farm* (1893), written in collaboration with his equally adroit though practically unknown brother, Roswell M. Field. A complete one-volume edition of his verse was issued in 1910.

Field died in Chicago, Illinois, November 4, 1895.

OUR TWO OPINIONS[1]

Us two wuz boys when we fell out,—
  Nigh to the age uv my youngest now;
Don't rec'lect what 'twuz about,
  Some small deeff'rence, I'll allow.
Lived next neighbors twenty years,
  A-hatin' each other, me 'nd Jim,—
He havin' *his* opinyin uv *me,*
  'Nd *I* havin' my opinyin uv *him.*

Grew up together 'nd wouldn't speak,
  Courted sisters, 'nd marr'd 'em, too;
'Tended same meetin'-house oncet a week,
  A-hatin' each other through 'nd through!
But when Abe Linkern asked the West
  F'r soldiers, we answered,—me 'nd Jim,—
He havin' *his* opinyin uv *me,*
  'Nd *I* havin' *my* opinyin uv *him.*

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[1] All of Field's verses are reprinted from *The Complete Works of Eugene Field* by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, holders of the copyright.

But down in Tennessee one night
  Ther' wuz sound uv firin' fur away,
'Nd the sergeant allowed ther'd be a fight
  With the Johnnie Rebs some time nex' day;
'Nd as I wuz thinkin' uv Lizzie 'nd home
  Jim stood afore me, long 'nd slim,—
He havin' *his* opinyin uv *me*,
  'Nd *I* havin' *my* opinyin uv *him.*

Seemed like we knew there wuz goin' to be
  Serious trouble f'r me 'nd him;
Us two shuck hands, did Jim 'nd me,
  But never a word from me or Jim!
He went *his* way 'nd *I* went *mine*,
  'Nd into the battle's roar went we,—
I havin' *my* opinyin uv *Jim*,
  'Nd *he* havin' *his* opinyin uv *me.*

Jim never came back from the war again,
  But I hain't forgot that last, last night
When, waitin' f'r orders, us two men
  Made up 'nd shuck hands, afore the fight.
'Nd after it all, it's soothin' to know
  That here I be 'nd younder's Jim,—
He havin' *his* opinyin uv *me*,
  'Nd *I* havin' *my* opinyin uv *him.*

LITTLE BOY BLUE

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
  But sturdy and staunch he stands;
The little toy soldier is red with rust,
  And his musket molds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new,
  And the soldier was passing fair;
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
  Kissed them and put them there.

"Now don't you go till I come," he said,
  "And don't you make any noise!"
So, toddling off to his trundle bed,
  He dreamt of the pretty toys;

And, as he was dreaming, an angel song
  Awakened our Little Boy Blue—
Oh! the years are many, the years are long,
  But the little toy friends are true!

Aye, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
  Each in the same old place,
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
  The smile of a little face;
And they wonder, as waiting the long years through
  In the dust of that little chair,
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,
  Since he kissed them and put them there.

SEEIN' THINGS

I ain't afraid uv snakes or toads, or bugs or worms or mice,
An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice!
I'm pretty brave I guess; an' yet I hate to go to bed,
For, when I'm tucked up warm an' snug an' when my prayers are said,
Mother tells me "Happy Dreams" an' takes away the light,
An' leaves me lyin' all alone an' seein' things at night!

Sometimes they're in the corner, sometimes they're by the door,
Sometimes they're all a-standin' in the middle uv the floor;
Sometimes they are a-sittin' down, sometimes they're walkin' round
So softly and so creepy-like they never make a sound!
Sometimes they are as black as ink, an' other times they're white—
But color ain't no difference when you see things at night!

Once, when I licked a feller 'at had just moved on our street,
An' father sent me up to bed without a bite to eat,
I woke up in the dark an' saw things standin' in a row,
A-lookin' at me cross-eyed an' p'intin' at me—*so!*
Oh, my! I wuz so skeered 'at time I never slep' a mite—
It's almost alluz when I'm bad I see things at night!

Lucky thing I ain't a girl or I'd be skeered to death!
Bein' I'm a boy, I duck my head an' hold my breath.

An' I am, oh *so* sorry I'm a naughty boy, an' then
I promise to be better an' I say my prayers again!
Gran'ma tells me that's the only way to make it right
When a feller has been wicked an' sees things at night!

An' so when other naughty boys would coax me into sin,
I try to skwush the Tempter's voice 'at urges me within;
An' when they's pie for supper, or cakes 'at's big an' nice,
I want to—but I do not pass my plate f'r them things twice!
No, ruther let Starvation wipe me slowly out o' sight
Than I should keep a-livin' on an' seein' things at night!

ROSWELL MARTIN FIELD

Roswell Martin Field was born in St. Louis, Missouri, September 1, 1851, a year but a day after his famous brother. His mother died when he was still young and a cousin (Mary French) brought up the two boys in Amherst, Massachusetts. Roswell Field was graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy and attended Harvard for one year. Thereafter, his career paralleled Eugene's; he became a journalist, column conductor, bibliophile, founding the "Dofobs" ("Darned-old-fools-over-books"). His column, "Lights and Shadows," on the *Chicago Evening Post* ran for over fourteen years; he was by turns, music and dramatic critic, as well as an accomplished pianist. His principles were such that Eugene's lax habits threw "Rose" to quite the reverse. He died in Morristown, New Jersey, January 10, 1919.

Roswell Field was the author of several volumes, none of which attained the popularity of *Echoes from the Sabine Farm* (1892) written in collaboration with his brother. Usually considered Eugene Field's best performance, most readers have forgotten (if they ever realized) that the more delightful and far more dexterous of these paraphrases from Horace were signed "R. M. F." Overshadowed by his more dazzling and prolific brother, Roswell Martin Field was by no means the less gifted of the two.

TO HIS BOOK

(*Horace—Epistle XX*)

You vain, self-conscious little book,
Companion of my happy days,
How eagerly you seem to look
For wider fields to spread your lays;

My desk and locks cannot contain you,
Nor blush of modesty restrain you.

Well, then, begone, fool that thou art!
But do not come to me and cry,
When critics strike you to the heart:
"Oh, wretched little book am I!"
You know I tried to educate you
To shun the fate that must await you.

In youth you may encounter friends
(Pray this prediction be not wrong),
But wait until old age descends
And thumbs have smeared your gentlest song;
Then will the moths connive to eat you
And rural libraries secrete you.

However, should a friend some word
Of my obscure career request,
Tell him how deeply I was stirred
To spread my wings beyond the nest;
Take from my years, which are before you,
To boom my merits, I implore you.

Tell him that I am short and fat,
Quick in my temper, soon appeased,
With locks of gray—but what of that?—
Loving the sun, with nature pleased.
I'm more than four and forty, hark you;
But ready for a night off, mark you!

A COUNTERBLAST AGAINST GARLIC

(*Horace—Epode III*)

May the man who has cruelly murdered his sire—
A crime to be punished with death—
Be condemned to eat garlic till he shall expire
Of his own foul and venomous breath!
What stomachs these rustics must have who can eat
This dish that Canidia made,
Which imparts to my colon a torturous heat,
And a poisonous look, I'm afraid!

They say that ere Jason attempted to yoke
The fire-breathing bulls to the plow
He smeared his whole body with garlic, a joke
Which I fully appreciate now.
When Medea gave Glauce her beautiful dress,
In which garlic was scattered about,
It was cruel and rather low-down, I confess,
But it settled the point beyond doubt.

On thirsty Apulia ne'er has the sun
Inflicted such terrible heat;
As for Hercules' robe, although poisoned, 'twas fun
When compared with this garlic we eat!
Maecenas, if ever on garbage like this
You express a desire to be fed,
May Mrs. Maecenas object to your kiss,
And lie at the foot of the bed!

EDWIN MARKHAM

Edwin Markham was born in Oregon City, Oregon, April 23, 1852, the youngest son of pioneer parents. His father died before he reached his fifth year and in 1857 he was taken by his mother to a wild valley in the Suisun Hills in central California. Here he grew to young manhood; farming, broncho-riding, laboring on a cattle ranch, educating himself in the primitive country schools. At eighteen he determined to be a teacher and entered the State Normal School at San José.

Since childhood, Markham had been writing verses of no extraordinary merit, one of his earliest pieces being a typically Byronic echo (*A Dream of Chaos*) full of the high-sounding fustian of the period. Several years before he uttered his famous challenge, Markham was writing poems of protest, insurrectionary in theme but conventional in effect. Suddenly, in 1899, a sense of outrage at the inequality of human struggle voiced itself in the sonorous poem, "The Man with the Hoe." (See Preface.) Inspired by Millet's painting, Markham made the bowed, broken French peasant a symbol of the poverty-stricken toiler in all lands—his was a protest not against toil but the drudgery, the exploitation of labor. "The Yeoman is the landed and well-to-do farmer," says Markham, "you need shed no tears for him. But here in the Millet picture is his opposite—the Hoeman; the landless, the soul-blighted workman of the world."

The success of the poem upon its appearance in the San Francisco *Examiner* (January 15, 1899) was instantaneous. The lines appeared in every part of the globe; they were quoted and copied in every walk of life, in the literary and the labor world. The same year of its publication, it was incorporated in Markham's first volume, *The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems* (1899). Two years later, his almost equally well known poem was published. The same passion that fired Markham to champion the great common workers equipped him to write of the great Commoner in *Lincoln, and Other Poems* (1901). His later volumes are a descent, melodious but scarcely remarkable. They have the rhetoric without the resonance of the forerunners. Never reaching the heights, there are, nevertheless, moments of dignity in *The Shoes of Happiness* (1914) and *The Gates of Paradise* (1920).

Markham came East in 1901, where he has lived ever since, making his home on Staten Island, New York, compiling and lecturing.

OUTWITTED

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

THE MAN WITH THE HOE[1]

(*Written after seeing Millet's world-famous painting*)

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?

[1] Revised version, 1920. Copyright by Edwin Markham.

Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the caverns of Hell to their last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More packt with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?

PREPAREDNESS

For all your days prepare,
And meet them ever alike:
When you are the anvil, bear—
When you are the hammer, strike.

LINCOLN, THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE[1]

When the Norn Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour
Greatening and darkening as it hurried on,
She left the Heaven of Heroes and came down
To make a man to meet the mortal need.
She took the tried clay of the common road—
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of earth,
Dasht through it all a strain of prophecy;
Tempered the heap with thrill of human tears;
Then mixt a laughter with the serious stuff.
Into the shape she breathed a flame to light
That tender, tragic, ever-changing face;
And laid on him a sense of the Mystic Powers,
Moving—all husht—behind the mortal veil.
Here was a man to hold against the world,
A man to match the mountains and the sea.

The color of the ground was in him, the red earth;
The smack and tang of elemental things:
The rectitude and patience of the cliff;
The good-will of the rain that loves all leaves;
The friendly welcome of the wayside well;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;
The secrecy of streams that make their way
Under the mountain to the rifted rock;
The tolerance and equity of light
That gives as freely to the shrinking flower
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky. Sprung from the West,

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[1] See pages 163, 189, 333, 334, 349, 354, 467.

He drank the valorous youth of a new world.
The strength of virgin forests braced his mind,
The hush of spacious prairies stilled his soul.
His words were oaks in acorns; and his thoughts
Were roots that firmly gript the granite truth.

Up from log cabin to the Capitol,
One fire was on his spirit, one resolve—
To send the keen ax to the root of wrong,
Clearing a free way for the feet of God,
The eyes of conscience testing every stroke,
To make his deed the measure of a man.
He built the rail-pile as he built the State,
Pouring his splendid strength through every blow:
The grip that swung the ax in Illinois
Was on the pen that set a people free.

So came the Captain with the mighty heart.
And when the judgment thunders split the house,
Wrenching the rafters from their ancient rest,
He held the ridgepole up, and spiked again
The rafters of the Home. He held his place—
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise.
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

CHARLES E. S. WOOD

Charles Erskine Scott Wood was born at Erie, Pennsylvania, February 20, 1852, educated at the United States Military Academy (1874) and Columbia, where he received the degrees of Ph.B. and LL.B. in 1883. Wood served in the United States Army for almost ten years, acting as lieutenant in various campaigns against the Indians during 1877-8. He was admitted to the bar in 1884, practiced at Portland, Oregon, and retired in 1919.

In 1901 he published *A Book of Tales, Being Myths of the North American Indians*. In 1904, his symbolic *A Masque of Love* appeared. His finest work, however, was *The Poet in the Desert*

(1915), a pageant of protest from which the first two quoted excerpts are taken. The volume itself is one long poem, a rhapsodic dialogue between Truth and a poet. The central theme might be termed the manhood of humanity, and about this leading *motif* Wood has woven a set of graphic variations. A disgust of tyranny, a challenge to injustice, a celebration of bastards—these may be the motive power prompting the poet; what results, however, has not merely the ring of passion but is a controlled assembling of sharply drawn pictures.

In 1918 a limited number of privately printed copies of *Maia* appeared. *Maia* is a sonnet sequence of the seasons with numerous interjections by the author and a few interpolations by Sara Bard Field, to whom is credited the form of the volume. *Heavenly Discourses*, which had originally appeared in *The Masses*, caused more discussion upon republication in 1927, Wood being compared to Voltaire, Paine and Mark Twain. *The Poet in the Desert* was reissued in a popular form in 1928.

SUNRISE

(*From "The Poet in the Desert"*)

The lean coyote, prowler of the night,
Slips to his rocky fastnesses.
Jack-rabbits noiselessly shuttle among the sage-brush,
And, from the castellated cliffs,
Rock-ravens launch their proud black sails upon the day.
The wild horses troop back to their pastures.
The poplar-trees watch beside the irrigation-ditches.
Orioles, whose nests sway in the cotton-wood trees by the
    ditch-side, begin to twitter.
All shy things, breathless, watch
The thin white skirts of dawn,
The dancer of the sky,
Who trips daintily down the mountain-side
Emptying her crystal chalice. . . .
And a red-bird, dipped in sunrise, cracks from a poplar's top
His exultant whip above a silver world.

THE DESERT

She is a nun, withdrawing behind her veil;
Gray, mysterious, meditative, unapproachable.

Her body is tawny with the eagerness of the Sun
And her eyes are pools which shine in deep canyons.
She is a beautiful swart woman
With opals at her throat,
Rubies at her wrists
And topaz about her ankles.
Her breasts are like the evening and the day stars.

She sits upon her throne of light, proud and silent,
Indifferent to wooers.
The Sun is her servitor, the stars her attendants,
Running before her.
She sings a song unto her own ears,
Solitary but sufficient:
The song of her being.
She is a naked dancer, dancing upon
A pavement of porphyry and pearl,
Dazzling, so that the eyes must be shaded.
She wears the stars upon her bosom
And braids her hair with the constellations.

FIRST SNOW

The cows are bawling in the mountains.
The snowflakes fall.
They are leaving the pools and pebbled fountains;
Troubled, they bawl.
They are winding down the mountain's shoulders
Through the open pines,
Through wild rose thickets and the granite bowlders
In broken lines.
Each calf trots close beside its mother
And so they go,
Bawling and calling to one another
About the snow.

IRWIN RUSSELL

Irwin Russell was born June 3, 1853, at Port Gibson, Mississippi, where he studied law and was admitted to the bar. His restless nature and wayward disposition drove him from one place to another, from dissipation to dissipation, from not too rugged health to utter breakdown. In July, 1879, he was forced to leave New York, working his way down to New Orleans on a coast steamer, trying to rehabilitate himself as reporter on the New Orleans *Picayune*. But illness pursued him and the following December Russell died, cut off, in the midst of his promise, before he had reached his twenty-seventh year.

Although Russell did not take his poetry seriously and though the bulk of it is small, its influence has been large. Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris have acknowledged their indebtedness to him; the creator of Uncle Remus writing, "Irwin Russell was among the first—if not the very first—of Southern writers to appreciate the literary possibilities of the negro character." He entered the negroes' life, appreciated their turns of thought, saw things with that peculiar mixture of reverence and unconscious humor that is so integral a part of the Spirituals. "Blessing the Dance" and "De Fust Banjo" (from Russell's operetta *Christmas-Night in the Quarters*) are excellent examples; faithful renderings of the mind of the old-fashioned, simple and sententious child of the plantation.

A collection of Russell's poems appeared, with an introduction by Joel Chandler Harris, in 1888. In 1917, a more inclusive volume, with illustrations by E. W. Kemble, was published by The Century Company.

Russell died suddenly, in an obscure boarding house in New Orleans, December 23, 1879.

BLESSING THE DANCE

(*From "Christmas-Night in the Quarters"*)

O Mahsr! let dis gath'rin fin' a blessin' in yo' sight!
Don't jedge us hard fur what we does—yo' know it's Chrismus-
night;
An' all de balunce ob de yeah we does as right's we kin.
Ef dancin's wrong, O Mahsr! let de time excuse de sin!

We labors in de vin'ya'd, wukin' hard an' wukin' true;
Now, shorely yo' won't notus, ef we eats a grape or two,
An' takes a leetle holiday,—a leetle restin'-spell,—
Bekase, nex' week, we'll start in fresh, an' labor twicet as well.

Remember, Mahsr,—min' dis now,—de sinfulness ob sin
Is 'pendin' 'pon de sperrit what we goes an' does it in;
An' in a righchis frame ob min' we's gwine to dance an' sing,
A-feelin' like King David, when he cut de pigeon-wing.

It seems to me—indeed it do—I mebbe mout be wrong—
Dat people raly *ought* to dance, when Chrismus comes along;
Des dance bekase dey's happy—like de birds hops in de trees,
De pine-top fiddle soundin' to de bowin' ob de breeze.

We has no ark to dance afore, like Isrul's prophet king;
We has no harp to soun' de chords, to holp us out to sing;
But 'cordin' to de gif's we has we does de bes' we knows,
An' folks don't 'spise de vi'let-flower bekase it ain't de rose.

Yes, bless us, please, Sah, eben ef we's doin' wrong tonight;
Kase den we'll need de blessin' more'n ef we's doin' right;
An' let de blessin's stay wid us, untel we comes to die,
An' goes to keep our Chrismus wid dem sheriffs in de sky!

Yes, tell dem preshis anguls we's a-gwine to jine 'em soon:
Our voices we's a-trainin' fur to sing de glory tune;
We's ready when you wants us, an' it ain't no matter when.
O Mahsr! call yo' chillen soon, an' take 'em home! *Amen.*

DE FUST BANJO

Go 'way, fiddle! folks is tired o' hearin' you a-squawkin'.
Keep silence fur yo' betters! don't you heah de banjo talkin'?
About de 'possum's tail she's gwine to lecter—ladies, listen!
About de ha'r whut isn't dar, an' why de ha'r is missin':

"Dar's gwine to be a' oberflow," said Noah, lookin' solemn—
Fur Noah tuk de *Herald,* an' he read de ribber column—
An' so he sot his hands to wuk a-clarin' timber-patches,
An' 'lowed he's gwine to build a boat to beat de steamah
Natchez.

Ol' Noah kep' a-nailin' an' a-chippin' an' a-sawin';
An' all de wicked neighbors kep' a-laughin' an' a-pshawin';
But Noah didn't min' 'em, knowin' whut wuz gwine to happen:
An' forty days an' forty nights de rain it kep' a-drappin'.

Now, Noah had done cotched a lot ob ebry sort o' beas'es—
Ob all de shows a-trabbelin', it beat 'em all to pieces!
He had a Morgan colt an' sebral head o' Jarsey cattle—
An' druv 'em 'board de Ark as soon's he heered de thunder
rattle.

Den sech anoder fall ob rain! It come so awful hebby,
De ribber riz immejitly, an' busted troo de lebbee;
De people all wuz drownded out—'cep' Noah an' de critters,
An' men he'd hired to wuk de boat—an' one to mix de bitters.

De Ark she kep' a-sailin' an' a-sailin' *an'* a-sailin';
De lion got his dander up, an' like to bruk de palin';
De sarpints hissed; de painters yelled; tel', whut wid all de
fussin',
You c'u'dn't hardly heah de mate a-bossin' 'roun' an' cussin'.

Now Ham, de only nigger whut wuz runnin' on de packet,
Got lonesome in de barber-shop, an' c'u'dn't stan' de racket;
An' so, fur to amuse he-se'f, he steamed some wood an' bent it,
An' soon he had a banjo made—de fust dat wuz invented.

He wet de ledder, stretched it on; made bridge an' screws
an' aprin;
An' fitted in a proper neck—'twuz berry long an' taperin';
He tuk some tin, an' twisted him a thimble fur to ring it:
An' den de mighty question riz: how wuz he gwine to string it?

De 'possum had as fine a tail as dis dat I's a-singin';
De ha'r's so long an' thick an' strong,—des fit fur banjo-
stringin';
Dat nigger shaved 'em off as short as washday-dinner graces:
An' sorted ob 'em by de size—f'om little E's to basses.

He strung her, tuned her, struck a jig,—'twuz "*Nebber min'
de wedder,*"—
She soun' like forty-lebben bands a-playin' all togedder:
Some went to pattin'; some to dancin': Noah called de figgers;
An' Ham he sot an' knocked de tune, de happiest ob niggers!

Now, sence dat time—it's mighty strange—dere's not de
slightes' showin'
Ob any ha'r at all upon de 'possum's tail a-growin';
An' curyus, too, dat nigger's ways: his people nebber los'
'em—
Fur whar you finds de nigger—dar's de banjo an' de 'possum!

Edith Matilda Thomas was born at Chatham, Ohio, August 12, 1854. She was educated in the Normal Institute at Geneva, Ohio, engaged in much editorial work, living in New York from 1888 until her death in 1925.

Miss Thomas was the author of some dozen books of verse, most of them lightly lyrical in mood, although a few of her individual poems have a more dramatic quality. The best of her work may be found in *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1887), *The Inverted Torch* (1890) and *The Flower from the Ashes* (1915).

"FROST TONIGHT"

Apple-green west and an orange bar;
And the crystal eye of a lone, one star . . .
And, "Child, take the shears and cut what you will,
Frost tonight—so clear and dead-still."

Then I sally forth, half sad, half proud,
And I come to the velvet, imperial crowd,
The wine-red, the gold, the crimson, the pied,—
The dahlias that reign by the garden-side.

The dahlias I might not touch till tonight!
A gleam of shears in the fading light,
And I gathered them all,—the splendid throng,
And in one great sheaf I bore them along.

. . . . . .

In my garden of Life with its all late flowers
I heed a Voice in the shrinking hours:
"Frost tonight—so clear and dead-still" . . .
Half sad, half proud, my arms I fill.

H. C. BUNNER

Henry Cuyler Bunner was born at Oswego, New York, August 3, 1855. At twenty-two he was appointed editor of *Puck* (then the most prominent of comic weeklies), a position which he held until his death. For more than ten years he wrote almost all the rhymed contributions to that journal—to say nothing of quantities of short stories (his *Short Sixes*, first published in 1890, are still well known), prose paragraphs, topical parodies, editorials, etc. Like Field, the artist was finally buried in the journalist; but, unlike Field, Bunner kept the work of the serious poet separate from that of the manufacturer of satiric trifles. Yet, in spite of certain detached fragments in *Airs from Arcady* (1884) and *Rowen: Second Crop Songs* (1892), Bunner is likely to be remembered chiefly for his flippant *vers de société*, his skillful and gravely mocking absurdities.

"Behold the Deeds!" is a splendid example of Bunner's wit and technical ingenuity. It is a burlesque of the old ballads in the guise of a Chant-Royal, one of the strictest and most difficult of the French forms. Bunner's was, at best, an artificial world, a world of graceful compliments, polite evasions, rhymed *billets doux*, with light sighs and lighter laughter tinkling among the teacups. Even so pathetic a subject as "A Pitcher of Mignonette" is framed in the tight borders of a triolet. Lacking Austin Dobson's exquisiteness and *savoir faire*, he was not without the Englishman's neatness of touch.

Bunner died, in New Jersey, in 1896; a collection of his poems, edited by Brander Matthews, appearing in the same year.

BEHOLD THE DEEDS!

(*Being the Plaint of Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, Salesman of Fancy Notions, held in durance of his Landlady for a "failure to connect" on Saturday night*)

I would that all men my hard case would know,
  How grievously I suffer for no sin:
I, Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, for lo!
  I of my landlady am lockèd in
For being short on this sad Saturday,
Nor having shekels of silver wherewith to pay:
She turned and is departed with my key;
Wherefore, not even as other boarders free,
  I sing (as prisoners to their dungeon-stones
When for ten days they expiate a spree):
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

One night and one day have I wept my woe;
  Nor wot I, when the morrow doth begin,
If I shall have to write to Briggs & Co.,
  To pray them to advance the requisite tin

For ransom of their salesman, that he may
Go forth as other boarders go alway—
As those I hear now flocking from their tea,
Led by the daughter of my landlady
  Piano-ward. This day, for all my moans,
Dry-bread and water have been servèd me.
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Miss Amabel Jones is musical, and so
  The heart of the young he-boarder doth win,
Playing "The Maiden's Prayer" *adagio*—
  That fetcheth him, as fetcheth the "bunko skin"
The innocent rustic. For my part, I pray
That Badarjewska maid may wait for aye
Ere sits she with a lover, as did we
Once sit together, Amabel! Can it be
  That all that arduous wooing not atones
For Saturday's shortness of trade dollars three?
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Yea! She forgets the arm that was wont to go
  Around her waist. She wears a buckle whose pin
Galleth the crook of her young man's elbow.
  I forget not, for I that youth have been!
Smith was aforetime the Lothario gay.
Yet once, I mind me, Smith was forced to stay
Close in his room. Not calm as I was he;
But his noise brought no pleasaunce, verily.
  Small ease he got of playing on the bones
Or hammering on the stope-pipe, that I see.
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Thou, for whose fear the figurative crow
  I eat, accursed be thou and all thy kin!
Thee will I show up—yea, up I will show
  Thy too-thick buckwheats and thy tea too thin.
Aye! here I dare thee, ready for the fray:
Thou dost *not* "keep a first-class house" I say!
It does not with the advertisements agree.

Thou lodgest a Briton with a puggaree,
  And thou hast harbored Jacobses and Cohns,
Also a Mulligan. Thus denounce I thee!
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Envoy

Boarders! the worst I have not told to ye:
She hath stolen my trousers, that I may not flee
  Privily by the window. Hence these groans.
There is no fleeing in a *robe de nuit.*
  Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

A PITCHER OF MIGNONETTE

A pitcher of mignonette
  In a tenement's highest casement,—
Queer sort of flower-pot—yet
That pitcher of mignonette
Is a garden in heaven set,
  To the little sick child in the basement—
The pitcher of mignonette,
  In a tenement's highest casement.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

Lizette Woodworth Reese was born January 9, 1856, in Waverly, Baltimore County, Maryland, of mixed English and German stock. After receiving an education chiefly in private schools she taught English at the Western High School in Baltimore, where she lived. After many years of service, she retired in 1921. In 1923, the alumni of the High School where she had taught for a score of years, together with the teachers and pupils, presented the school with a bronze tablet inscribed with her poem, "Tears," one of the most famous sonnets written by an American.

At first glance, Miss Reese's work seems merely a continuation of the traditional strain; in fact, some of her critics decried her poetry as being English rather than American. But it was natural that her verse should sound a note which has been the dominant one in English pastoral poetry from Wordsworth to Housman. Nor was Miss Reese's inheritance alone responsible for this. The country around Baltimore, every tree and path of which Miss Reese knew so intimately, was settled by the English and had the very shape and color of counties like Sussex and Buckinghamshire.

Miss Reese's first book, *A Branch of May* (1887), had an undercurrent of intensity beneath its quiet contours. Few of its readers in the Nineties would have dreamed that this straightforward undidactic speech would pave the way for the direct songs of Sara Teasdale and Edna St. Vincent Millay. In a period of sugared sentiment and lace valentine lyrics, Miss Reese's crisp lines were an entire generation ahead of the times and were consequently appreciated only for their pictorial felicities. *A Handful of Lavender* (1891), *A Quiet Road* (1896), and *A Wayside Lute* (1909), established an artistry which, for all its seemingly old-fashioned elegance, is as spontaneous as it is skillful. Here are no verbal tricks, no false postures; here is a simple record which is, somehow, never banal. "This poetry of hers," writes Mary Colum, "will persist, not because the author was cleverer or more original than other writers, but because in some way her nerves were more subtle in response to the kinds of life and experiences that came her way."

From 1909 to 1920 there was a silence. During these ten years, Miss Reese wrote little, and published less. Suddenly her work appeared again, keener and more concise than ever. *Spicewood* was published in 1920; *Wild Cherry* in 1923; a generous *Selected Poems* in 1926; *Little Henrietta* in 1927, the poet's seventieth year; *A Victorian Village*, her reminiscences of a changing world, in 1929. In all these volumes, as well as the still more recent, and as yet uncollected, poetry (four examples of which are included in the following group), one finds the same things which have always held Miss Reese. Again and again she writes of lilacs in Old York Lane, of thorn trees and blackberry rain, of Judas-blossoms and daffodils, of spring ecstasy and lost love, of a dead lady in her garden and Mary at the manger. But there is always something personal, always something which makes the very repetitions take on a light which is fresh and clear. At least a dozen of her brief songs and lyrical sonnets have found a niche in American literature. Hers is a singing that is not dependent on a fashion.

TEARS

When I consider Life and its few years—
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street,—
I wonder at the idleness of tears.

Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight
Chieftains, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep:
Homer his sight, David his little lad!

SPICEWOOD

The spicewood burns along the gray, spent sky,
In moist unchimneyed places, in a wind,
That whips it all before, and all behind,
Into one thick, rude flame, now low, now high.
It is the first, the homeliest thing of all—
At sight of it, that lad that by it fares,
Whistles afresh his foolish, town-caught airs—
A thing so honey-colored and so tall!

It is as though the young Year, ere he pass
To the white riot of the cherry tree,
Would fain accustom us, or here, or there,
To his new sudden ways with bough and grass,
So starts with what is humble, plain to see,
And all familiar as a cup, a chair.

SPRING ECSTASY

Oh, let me run and hide,
  Let me run straight to God;
The weather is so mad with white
  From sky down to the clod!

If but one thing were so,
  Lilac, or thorn out there,
It would not be, indeed,
  So hard to bear.

The weather has gone mad with white;
  The cloud, the highway touch.
White lilac is enough;
  White thorn too much!

OWNERSHIP

Love not a loveliness too much,
For it may turn and clutch you so,
That you be less than any serf,
And at its nodding go.

Be master; otherwise you grow
Too small, too humble, like to one
Long dispossessed, who stares through tears
At his lost house across the sun.

Wild carrot in an old field here,
Or steeple choked with music there,
Possess, as part of what is yours;
Thus prove yourself the heir.

Your barony is sky and land,
From morning's start to the night's close;
Bend to your need Orion's hounds,
Or the small fagot of a rose.

A PURITAN LADY

Wild Carthage held her, Rome,
   Sidon. She stared to tears
Tall, golden Helen, wearying
   Behind the Trojan spears.

Towered Antwerp knew her well;
   She wore her quiet gown
In some hushed house in Oxford grass,
   Or lane in Salem town.

Humble and high in one,
   Cool, certain, different,
She lasts; scarce saint, yet half a child,
   As hard, as innocent.

What grave, long afternoons,
   What caged airs round her blown,
Stripped her of humor, left her bare
   As cloud, or wayside stone?

Made her as clear a thing,
In this slack world as plain
As a white flower on a grave,
Or sleet sharp at a pane?

A FLOWER OF MULLEIN

I am too near, too clear a thing for you,
A flower of mullein in a crack of wall,
The villagers half-see, or not at all;
Part of the weather, like the wind or dew.
You love to pluck the different, and find
Stuff for your joy in cloudy loveliness;
You love to fumble at a door, and guess
At some strange happening that may wait behind.
Yet life is full of tricks, and it is plain,
That men drift back to some worn field or roof,
To grip at comfort in a room, a stair;
To warm themselves at some flower down a lane:
You, too, may long, grown tired of the aloof,
For the sweet surety of the common air.

WILD CHERRY

Why make your lodging here in this spent lane,
Where but an old man, with his sheep each day,
Twice through the forgotten grass goes by your way,
Half sees you there, and not once looks again?
For you are of the very ribs of spring,
And should have many lovers, who have none.
In silver cloaks, in hushed troops down the sun
Should they draw near, oh, strange and lovely thing!
Beauty has no set weather, no sure place;
Her careful pageantries are here as there,
With nothing lost. And soon, some lad may start—
A strayed Mayer in this unremembered space—
At your tall white, and know you very fair,
Let all else go to roof within your heart.

OLD SAUL

I cannot think of any word
To make it plain to you,
How white a thing the hawthorn bush
That delicately blew

Within a crook of Tinges Lane;
Each May Day there it stood;
And lit a flame of loveliness
For the small neighborhood.

So fragile-white a thing it was,
I cannot make it plain.
Or the sweet fumbling of the bees,
Like the break in a rain.

Old Saul lived near. And this his life:—
To cobble for his bread;
To mourn a tall son lost at sea;
A daughter worse than dead.

And so, in place of all his lack,
He set the hawthorn-tree;
Made it his wealth, his mirth, his god,
His Zion to touch and see.

Born English he. Down Tinges Lane
His lad's years came and went,
He saw out there behind his thorn,
A hundred thorns of Kent.

At lovers slipping through the dusk,
He shook a lover's head;
Grudged them each flower. It was too white
For any but the dead.

Once on a blurred, wet, silver day,
He said to two or three:
"Folks, when I go, pluck yonder bloom,
That I may take with me."

But it was winter when he went,
The road wind-wrenched and torn;
They laid upon his coffin lid
A wreath made all of thorn.

WOMEN

Some women herd such little things—a box
Oval and glossy, in its gilt and red,
Or squares of satin, or a high, dark bed—
But when love comes, they drive to it all their flocks;
Yield up their crooks; take little; gain for fold
And pasture each a small, forgotten grave.
When they are gone, then lesser women crave
And squander their sad hoards; their shepherds' gold.
Some gather life like faggots in a wood,
And crouch its blaze, without a thought at all
Past warming their pinched selves to the last spark.
And women as a whole are swift and good,
In humor scarce, their measure being small;
They plunge and leap, yet somehow miss the dark.

SURETY

How do I know that you will come again?
I judge you by imperishable things
Like crab-trees rosy as the cloaks of kings,
That twice a year blow down the same tall lane.
I dare the silence in the house, each place
Without you, as a stalk of leaf, the wrong
The neighbors do you in their talk, the song
Beaten out of bells, and dusk, and a great space.
Nothing can tear the spring from out the year,
Or love from out the heart. Both hands have I
Filled with crab-bloom November as in May.
Is bloom to bough than you to me more dear?
Has the old trick of flowering been put by?
You will come back, you will come back and stay.

CROWS

Earth is raw with this one note,
 This tattered making of a song,
Narrowed down to a crow's throat,
 Above the willow-trees that throng

The crooking field from end to end.
 Fixed as the sun, the grave, this sound;
Of what the weather has to spend
 As much a part as sky or ground.

The primal yellow of that flower,
 The tansy making August plain;
And the stored wildness of this hour
 It sucks up like a bitter rain.

Miss it we would, were it not here,
 Simple as water, rough as spring,
It hurls us at the point of spear,
 Back to some naked, early thing.

Listen now. As with a hoof
 It stamps an image on the gust;
Chimney by chimney a lost roof
 Starts for a moment from its dust.

HORACE TRAUBEL

Horace Traubel, often referred to as "Whitman's Boswell," was born in Camden, New Jersey, December 19, 1858, of mixed Jewish and Christian parentage. His scholastic education was desultory; after leaving school he sold newspapers, worked as an errand boy and helped his father in a stationery store. Later he became a printer's devil, proof-reader, reporter and editorial writer. In 1873 Walt Whitman came to Camden, little dreaming he would spend the remainder of his life there. He was almost friendless, a sick man, and alone. The Traubel household welcomed him in and an extraordinary friendship sprang up between the aging poet and the young boy. Traubel saw Whitman some part of each day for almost twenty years. "As the years fled," says David Karsner in his *Life of Horace Traubel,* "he catered to Whitman's needs in a hundred different ways. He would bring Old Walt such papers and magazines as he knew would interest him. He ran his errands . . . and assumed the details and responsibilities connected with the publishing of the later editions of Whitman's books." This intimacy is fully recorded in Traubel's chief work, a series of volumes, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, a compilation which has been called "Whitman's unconscious autobiography."

It is inevitable that Traubel's own poetry should betray the strong influence of his hero. Yet in several poems in *Optimos* (1910) and *Chants Communal* (1914) Traubel achieves a personal idiom; beneath the wearying length and repetitive phrases, he communicates the fervor of the insurgent who wrote, "I build no fires to burn anybody up. I only build fires to light up the way."

Traubel died at Bon Echo, Ontario, Canada, where he had gone for his health, September 8, 1919.

HOW ARE YOU, DEAR WORLD, THIS MORNING?

How are you, dear world, this morning?
Clean from my bath of sleep,
Warm from the bosom of my mother star,
Recharged with the energy of my father self,
Restored from all derelict hours to the lawful service of time,
I come without gift or doctrine or tethering humor
To entertain your fateful will.

Do the things that were stolen remain stolen?
Do the lives that were destroyed remain dead?
Do the stragglers who failed still fail?
Does the sleeper who slept the sleep of the merchant awake only to the merchant?
Does the law that was yesterday at my throat awake only to the law?
Does the singer awake only to sing, the artist to paint, and the orator to talk?
Or does the merchant awake to the man?
Or does the law of the state awake to the law of the heart?
Or do stolen things shift back into right relations?
Or is the singer silent, or does the artist put aside his paints, or has the orator stopt talking, because something greater than song or art or eloquence has appeared in the face of the multitude?

How are you, dear world, this morning?
We have had confidences other days but somehow the confidences of this day are sweetest of all.
They find me where I am remote, they seek me out where I am reluctant, they confirm me where I am weak,
They melt me down from flaw and angle into purity and circle,
They interpret me to last night's strangers and they introduce me to the real meanings of my vagrant past,
They remove me from my quarrels and they deliver me to truce and peace;
For now I see that when of old I thought of justice and believed I was dreaming that only then was I awake,
For now I see that the wrongdoer is the first to withdraw wrong and is the only one who can withdraw it,
For now I see that all the effort I spent trying to discover why lives were beautiful or ugly has shown me that all ugliness and all beauty finally must lapse in one transfiguration,
For now in the confidences of this morning, in the rapture of this awakening, I find my illimitable roots trailed backward and forward and round into all time and all men,
Pledging my love to countless surrenders and repeals.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN

Frank Dempster Sherman was born at Peekskill, New York, May 6, 1860. He entered Columbia University in 1879, where, after graduation and a subsequent instructorship, he was made adjunct professor in 1891 and Professor of Graphics in 1904. He held the latter position until his death, which occurred September 19, 1916.

Besides being a writer of airy lyrics and epigrammatic quatrains, Sherman was an enthusiastic genealogist and a designer (especially of book-plates) of no little skill. As a poet, his gift was essentially that of a writer of light verse—fragrant, fragile, yet seldom too sentimental. Pleasant is the word for it, a pleasantness perfumed with wit.

Sherman never wearied of the little lyric; even the titles of his volumes are instances of his penchant for the brief snatch of song: *Madrigals and Catches* (1887), *Lyrics for a Lute* (1890), *Little-Folk Lyrics* (1892), *Lyrics of Joy* (1904). A sumptuous collected edition of his poems was published, with an Introduction by Clinton Scollard, in 1917.

AT MIDNIGHT

See, yonder, the belfry tower
  That gleams in the moon's pale light—
Or is it a ghostly flower
  That dreams in the silent night?

I listen and hear the chime
  Go quavering over the town,
And out of this flower of Time
  Twelve petals are wafted down.

BACCHUS

Listen to the tawny thief,
Hid beneath the waxen leaf,
Growling at his fairy host,
Bidding her with angry boast
Fill his cup with wine distilled
From the dew the dawn has spilled:
Stored away in golden casks
Is the precious draught he asks.

Who,—who makes this mimic din
In this mimic meadow inn,
Sings in such a drowsy note,
Wears a golden-belted coat;
Loiters in the dainty room
Of this tavern of perfume;
Dares to linger at the cup
Till the yellow sun is up?

Bacchus 'tis, come back again
To the busy haunts of men;
Garlanded and gayly dressed,
Bands of gold about his breast;
Straying from his paradise,
Having pinions angel-wise,—
'Tis the honey-bee, who goes
Reveling within a rose!

TWO QUATRAINS

IVY

Upon the walls the graceful Ivy climbs
And wraps with green the ancient ruin gray:
Romance it is, and these her leafy rhymes
Writ on the granite page of yesterday.

DAWN

Out of the scabbard of the night
By God's hand drawn,
Flashes his shining sword of light,
And lo—the dawn!

CHARLOTTE P. S. GILMAN

Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman was born at Hartford, Connecticut, July 3, 1860. She began public work in 1890, lecturing on ethics, economics and sociology, identifying herself with the labor question and the advance of women.

She has written about a dozen books, her best works being *Woman and Economics* (1898) and *Human Work* (1904). Her volume of verse, *In This Our World* (1898), hurls many a shaft of ironic wit. Beneath the whimsical humor of "A Conservative" and the better known "Similar Cases" (unfortunately too long to quote) there is a sub-acid satire not easily forgotten.

A CONSERVATIVE

The garden beds I wandered by
One bright and cheerful morn,
When I found a new-fledged butterfly,
A-sitting on a thorn,
A black and crimson butterfly
All doleful and forlorn.

I thought that life could have no sting
To infant butterflies,
So I gazed on this unhappy thing
With wonder and surprise.
While sadly with his waving wing
He wiped his weeping eyes.

Said I, "What can the matter be?
  Why weepest thou so sore?
With garden fair and sunlight free
  And flowers in goodly store,"—
But he only turned away from me
  And burst into a roar.

Cried he, "My legs are thin and few
  Where once I had a swarm!
Soft fuzzy fur—a joy to view—
  Once kept my body warm,
Before these flapping wing-things grew,
  To hamper and deform!"

At that outrageous bug I shot
  The fury of mine eye;
Said I, in scorn all burning hot,
  In rage and anger high,
"You ignominious idiot!
  Those wings are made to fly!"

"I do not want to fly," said he,
  "I only want to squirm!"
And he drooped his wings dejectedly,
  But still his voice was firm:
"I do not want to be a fly!
  I want to be a worm!"

O yesterday of unknown lack,
  Today of unknown bliss!
I left my fool in red and black;
  The last I saw was this,—
The creature madly climbing back
  Into his chrysalis.

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

Louise Imogen Guiney was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1861. Although she attended Elmhurst Academy in Providence, most of her studying was with private tutors. In 1901 she went to England, where she lived until her death.

Traditional in form and feeling, Miss Guiney's work has a distinctly personal vigor; even her earliest collections, *Songs at the Start* (1884) and *The White Sail and Other Poems* (1887), are not without individuality. Her two most characteristic volumes are *A Roadside Harp* (1893) and *Patrins* (1897). *Happy Ending* appeared in 1909, and was reissued with additional poems in 1927.

Though much of her work is poeticizing rather than poetry, there is no mistaking the high seriousness of her aim. Responding to the influence of the Cavalier poets whom she greatly admired, her best lines beat with a galloping courage. Aware of the poet's mission, she held her pen "in trust to Art, not serving shame or lust"; a militant faith was the very keynote of her writing. Contemporary life affected her but little; even her peasant songs ("In Leinster" for example) have a remoteness which escapes the impact of the present. Still, she was not a literary escapist; a mystic with vitality, her fiber was vigorous even when she was most spiritual. "The Kings" and "The Wild Ride" are assured of a place as long as American anthologies are made.

Miss Guiney died at Chipping-Campden, near Oxford, England, November 3, 1920.

THE KINGS

A man said unto his Angel:
  "My spirits are fallen low,
And I cannot carry this battle:
  O brother! where might I go?

"The terrible Kings are on me
  With spears that are deadly bright;
Against me so from the cradle
  Do fate and my fathers fight."

Then said to the man his Angel:
  "Thou wavering, witless soul,
Back to the ranks! What matter
  To win or lose the whole,

"As judged by the little judges
  Who hearken not well, nor see?
Not thus, by the outer issue,
  The Wise shall interpret thee.

"Thy will is the sovereign measure
And only event of things:
The puniest heart, defying,
Were stronger than all these Kings.

"Though out of the past they gather,
Mind's Doubt, and Bodily Pain,
And pallid Thirst of the Spirit
That is kin to the other twain.

"And Grief, in a cloud of banners,
And ringleted Vain Desires,
And Vice, with the spoils upon him
Of thee and thy beaten sires,—

"While Kings of eternal evil
Yet darken the hills about,
Thy part is with broken saber
To rise on the last redoubt;

"To fear not sensible failure,
Nor covet the game at all,
But fighting, fighting, fighting,
Die, driven against the wall!"

THE WILD RIDE

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing and neighing.

Let cowards and laggards fall back! But alert to the saddle
Weatherworn and abreast, go men of our galloping legion,
With a stirrup-cup each to the lily of women that loves him.

The trail is through dolor and dread, over crags and morasses;
There are shapes by the way, there are things that appal or entice us;
What odds? We are Knights of the Grail, we are vowed to the riding.

Thought's self is a vanishing wing, and joy is a cobweb,
And friendship a flower in the dust, and glory a sunbeam:
Not here is our prize, nor, alas! after these our pursuing.

A dipping of plumes, a tear, a shake of the bridle,
A passing salute to this world and her pitiful beauty;
We hurry with never a word in the track of our fathers.

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
All day, on the road, the hoofs of invisible horses,
All night, from their stalls, the importunate pawing and
neighing.

We spur to a land of no name, outracing the storm-wind;
We leap to the infinite dark like sparks from the anvil.
Thou leadest, O God! All's well with Thy troopers that follow.

BLISS CARMAN

(William) Bliss Carman was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, April 15, 1861, of a long line of United Empire Loyalists who withdrew from Connecticut at the time of the Revolutionary War. Carman was educated at the University of New Brunswick (1879-81), at Edinburgh (1882-3) and Harvard 1886-8). He took up his residence in the United States about 1889.

In 1893, Carman issued his first book, *Low Tide on Grand Pré: A Book of Lyrics*. From the outset, it was evident that Carman possessed lyrical power: the ability to fuse thought in emotion, to interpret the external world through personal intensity. A buoyancy, new to American literature, made his *camaraderie* with Nature frankly pagan as contrasted to the moralizing tributes of many of his predecessors. This freshness and whimsy made Carman the natural collaborator for Richard Hovey, and when their first joint *Songs from Vagabondia* appeared in 1894 Carman's fame was established. (See Preface.) Even so devout a poet as Francis Thompson was enthusiastic about the book's irresponsibility: "These snatches," wrote Thompson, "have the spirit of a gypsy Omar Khayyám. They have always careless verve and often careless felicity; they are masculine and rough as roving songs should be."

Although the three *Vagabondia* collections contain Carman's best known poems, several of his other volumes (he published over twenty of them) vibrate with the same pulse. A physical gayety rises from *Ballads of Lost Haven* (1897), *From the Book of Myths* (1902) and *Songs of the Sea Children* (1904). Here are songs for the open road, the windy beach, the mountaintop.

Carman also wrote several volumes of essays and, in conjunction with Mary Perry King, devised poem-dances (*Daughters of Dawn*, 1913) suggesting Vachel Lindsay's later poem-games. Although the strength is diluted and the music thinned in the later collections, such as *April Airs* (1916) and *Wild Garden* (1929), some of the old magic persists; the spell is over-familiar but it is not quite powerless.

Carman died in June, 1929, at New Canaan, Connecticut, and was buried in his native province of New Brunswick.

A VAGABOND SONG

There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—
Touch of manner, hint of mood;
And my heart is like a rhyme,
With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
Of bugles going by.
And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.

There is something in October sets the gypsy blood astir;
We must rise and follow her,
When from every hill of flame
She calls and calls each vagabond by name.

THE GRAVEDIGGER

Oh, the shambling sea is a sexton old,
And well his work is done.
With an equal grave for lord and knave,
He buries them every one.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God, who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more;

But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore,—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

Oh, the ships of Greece and the ships of Tyre
Went out, and where are they?
In the port they made, they are delayed
With the ships of yesterday.

He followed the ships of England far,
As the ships of long ago;
And the ships of France they led him a dance,
But he laid them all arow.

Oh, a loafing, idle lubber to him
Is the sexton of the town;
For sure and swift, with a guiding lift,
He shovels the dead men down.

But though he delves so fierce and grim,
His honest graves are wide,
As well they know who sleep below
The dredge of the deepest tide.

Oh, he works with a rollicking stave at lip,
And loud is the chorus skirled;
With the burly rote of his rumbling throat
He batters it down the world.

He learned it once in his father's house,
Where the ballads of eld were sung;
And merry enough is the burden rough,
But no man knows the tongue.

Oh, fair, they say, was his bride to see,
And willful she must have been,
That she could bide at his gruesome side
When the first red dawn came in.

And sweet, they say, is her kiss to those
She greets to his border home;
And softer than sleep her hand's first sweep
That beckons, and they come.

Oh, crooked is he, but strong enough
To handle the tallest mast;
From the royal barque to the slaver dark,
He buries them all at last.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God, who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more;
But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore,—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

HEM AND HAW

Hem and Haw were the sons of sin,
Created to shally and shirk;
Hem lay 'round and Haw looked on
While God did all the work.

Hem was foggy, and Haw was a prig,
For both had the dull, dull mind;
And whenever they found a thing to do,
They yammered and went it blind.

Hem was the father of bigots and bores;
As the sands of the sea were they.
And Haw was the father of all the tribe
Who criticize today.

But God was an artist from the first,
And knew what he was about;
While over his shoulder sneered these two,
And advised him to rub it out.

They prophesied ruin ere man was made;
"Such folly must surely fail!"
And when he was done, "Do you think, my Lord,
He's better without a tail?"

And still in the honest working world,
With posture and hint and smirk,
These sons of the devil are standing by
While man does all the work.

They balk endeavor and baffle reform,
In the sacred name of law;
And over the quavering voice of Hem
Is the droning voice of Haw.

DAISIES

Over the shoulders and slopes of the dune
I saw the white daisies go down to the sea,
A host in the sunshine, an army in June,
The people God sends us to set our hearts free.

The bobolinks rallied them up from the dell,
The orioles whistled them out of the wood;
And all of their singing was, "Earth, it is well!"
And all of their dancing was, "Life, thou art good!"

GEORGE SANTAYANA

George Santayana was born in Madrid, Spain, December 16, 1863, came to the United States at the age of nine, and was educated at Harvard, where later he became instructor of philosophy the same year he received his Ph.D. This was in 1889. From 1889 to 1912 he remained at Harvard, becoming not merely one of the most noted professors in the history of the University, but one of the most appreciated minds in America. In 1914, he went abroad and ever since then he has been living in France and England.

Santayana's first work was in verse, *Sonnets and Poems* (1894). It is a wise seriousness which is here proclaimed, although the idiom is as traditional as the figures are orthodox. *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), and *The Life of Reason* (1905), received far more attention than Santayana's earlier verse. Having in the interval achieved fame as a philosopher, it was with an almost apologetic air that Santayana prefaced his collected *Poems* which, after a process of revision, appeared in 1923. "Of impassioned tenderness or Dionysiac frenzy I have nothing, nor even of that magic and pregnancy of phrase—really the creation of a fresh idiom—which marks the high lights of poetry. Even if my temperament had been naturally warmer, the fact that the English language (and I can write no other with assurance) was not my mother-tongue would of itself preclude any inspired use of it on my part; its roots do not quite reach to my center. I never drank in in childhood the homely cadences and ditties which in pure spontaneous poetry set the essential key."

Yet, as Santayana himself maintained later on, the thoughts which prompted his verses could not have been transcribed in any other form. If the prosody is worn somewhat thin, it is because the poet-philosopher chose the classic mold in the belief that the innate freedom of poets to hazard new forms does not abolish the freedom to attempt the old ones. The moralizing is personal, even the rhetoric is justified. "Here is the hand of an apprentice, but of an apprentice in a great school."

THE RUSTIC AT THE PLAY

Our youth is like a rustic at the play
That cries aloud in simple-hearted fear,
Curses the villain, shudders at the fray,
And weeps before the maiden's wreathèd bier.
Yet once familiar with the changeful show,
He starts no longer at a brandished knife,
But, his heart chastened at the sight of woe,
Ponders the mirrored sorrows of his life.
So tutored too, I watch the moving art
Of all this magic and impassioned pain
That tells the story of the human heart
In a false instance, such as poets feign;
I smile, and keep within the parchment furled
That prompts the passions of this strutting world.

"O WORLD, THOU CHOOSEST NOT THE BETTER PART"

O world, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, and had no chart,
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.

RICHARD HOVEY

Richard Hovey was born May 4, 1864, at Normal, Illinois, and graduated from Dartmouth in 1885. After leaving college, he became, in rapid succession, theologian, actor, journalist, lecturer, professor of English literature at Barnard, poet and dramatist.

His first volume, *The Laurel: An Ode* (1889), betrayed the over-musical influence of Lanier but gave promise of that extraordinary facility which often brought Hovey perilously close to mere technique. His exuberant virility found its outlet in the series of poems published in collaboration with Bliss Carman—the three volumes of *Songs from Vagabondia* (1894, 1896, 1900). Here he let himself go completely; nothing remained sober or static. His lines flung themselves across the page; danced with intoxicating abandon; shouted, laughed, and carried off the reader in a gale of high spirits. The famous *Stein Song* is an interlude in the midst of a far finer poem that, with its flavor of Whitman, begins:

> I said in my heart, "I am sick of four walls and a ceiling.
> I have need of the sky.
> I have business with the grass.
> I will up and get me away where the hawk is wheeling,
> Low and high,
> And the slow clouds go by.
> I will get me away to the waters that glass
> The clouds as they pass. . . ."

Hovey's attitude to his art was expressed in his own words concerning the poet: "It is not his mission," wrote Hovey in the *Dartmouth Magazine*, "to write elegant canzonettas for the delectation of the *dilettanti*, but to comfort the sorrowful and hearten the despairing, to champion the oppressed and declare to humanity its inalienable rights, to lay open to the world the heart of man—all its heights and depths, all its glooms and glories, to reveal the beauty in things and breathe into his fellows a love of it." This almost too conscious awareness of the poet's "mission" often marred Hovey's work; in responding to his program, he frequently overstressed his ringing enthusiasm, strained his own muscularity. But his power was as unflagging as his energy was persuasive.

Some of Hovey's best work was accomplished without shouting. The little known "Contemporaries" showed how well he could handle double portraiture, antedating the psycho-philosophical delineations of E. A. Robinson. As he grew older, Hovey became dissatisfied with the wanderlusty motif and its panacea of open roads and youthful comradeship. His subjects grew larger, his symbols were less obvious and not confined to "something potent brimming through the earth." The work on which he was engaged at the time of his death is significant; *Launcelot and Guenevere: A Poem in Five Dramas*, exemplary in its restrained force.

Although the varied lyrics in *Songs from Vagabondia* are the heartiest examples of Hovey, a representative collection of his riper work may be found in *Along the Trail* (1898). Hovey was slow to mature; this volume, in conjunction with the uncompleted *Taliesin: A Masque*, shows his later, more intensive power. The mood reflected is spiritual rather than physical; the note is high but never shrill. Besides the later work, *Along the Trail* contains "Spring" and the stirring "Comrades" in full.

Hovey died, during his thirty-sixth year, in New York, February 24, 1900.

AT THE CROSSROADS

You to the left and I to the right,
For the ways of men must sever—
And it well may be for a day and a night,
And it well may be forever.
But whether we meet or whether we part
(For our ways are past our knowing),
A pledge from the heart to its fellow heart
On the ways we all are going!

Here's luck!
For we know not where we are going.

Whether we win or whether we lose
With the hands that life is dealing,
It is not we nor the ways we choose
But the fall of the cards that's sealing.
There's a fate in love and a fate in fight,
And the best of us all go under—
And whether we're wrong or whether we're right,
We win, sometimes, to our wonder.
Here's luck!
That we may not yet go under!

With a steady swing and an open brow
We have tramped the ways together,
But we're clasping hands at the crossroads now
In the Fiend's own night for weather;
And whether we bleed or whether we smile
In the leagues that lie before us
The ways of life are many a mile
And the dark of Fate is o'er us.
Here's luck!
And a cheer for the dark before us!

You to the left and I to the right,
For the ways of men must sever,
And it well may be for a day and a night
And it well may be forever!
But whether we live or whether we die
(For the end is past our knowing),
Here's two frank hearts and the open sky,
Be a fair or an ill wind blowing!
Here's luck!
In the teeth of all winds blowing.

UNMANIFEST DESTINY[1]

To what new fates, my country, far
And unforeseen of foe or friend,
Beneath what unexpected star
Compelled to what unchosen end,

Across the sea that knows no beach,
The Admiral of Nations guides
Thy blind obedient keels to reach
The harbor where thy future rides!

The guns that spoke at Lexington
Knew not that God was planning then
The trumpet word of Jefferson
To bugle forth the rights of men.

To them that wept and cursed Bull Run,
What was it but despair and shame?
Who saw behind the cloud the sun?
Who knew that God was in the flame?

Had not defeat upon defeat,
Disaster on disaster come,
The slave's emancipated feet
Had never marched behind the drum.

There is a Hand that bends our deeds
To mightier issues than we planned;
Each son that triumphs, each that bleeds,
My country, serves Its dark command.

I do not know beneath what sky
Nor on what seas shall be thy fate;
I only know it shall be high,
I only know it shall be great.

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[1] The phrase "manifest destiny," which came into ordinary usage during the Spanish-American War, was meant to indicate America's paternal (or, as the opposing faction claimed, imperialistic) mission. Hovey was among those who indignantly denied any but unselfish motives to the conduct of his country.

LOVE IN THE WINDS

When I am standing on a mountain crest,
Or hold the tiller in the dashing spray,
My love of you leaps foaming in my breast,
Shouts with the winds and sweeps to their foray.
My heart bounds with the horses of the sea
And plunges in the wild ride of the night,
Flaunts in the teeth of tempest the large glee
That rides out Fate and welcomes gods to fight.

Ho, love, I laugh aloud for love of you,
Glad that our love is fellow to rough weather,—
No fretful orchid hothoused from the dew,
But hale and hardy as the highland heather,
Rejoicing in the wind that stings and thrills,
Comrade of ocean, playmate of the hills.

COMRADES[1]

Comrades, pour the wine tonight,
For the parting is with dawn.
Oh, the clink of cups together,
With the daylight coming on!
Greet the morn
With a double horn,
When strong men drink together!

Comrades, gird your swords tonight,
For the battle is with dawn.
Oh, the clash of shields together,
With the triumph coming on!
Greet the foe
And lay him low,
When strong men fight together.

Comrades, watch the tides tonight,
For the sailing is with dawn.
Oh, to face the spray together,
With the tempest coming on!

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[1] This is the lyric interlude from the long poem of the same name composed by Hovey in 1893.

Greet the Sea
With a shout of glee,
When strong men roam together.

Comrades, give a cheer tonight,
For the dying is with dawn.
Oh, to meet the stars together,
With the silence coming on!
Greet the end
As a friend a friend,
When strong men die together.

CONTEMPORARIES

"A barbered woman's man,"—yes, so
He seemed to me a twelvemonth since;
And so he may be—let it go—
Admit his flaws—we need not wince
To find our noblest not all great.
What of it? He is still the prince,
And we the pages of his state.

The world applauds his words; his fame
Is noised wherever knowledge be;
Even the trader hears his name,
As one far inland hears the sea;
The lady quotes him to the beau
Across the cup of Russian tea;
They know him and they do not know.

I know him. In the nascent years
Men's eyes shall see him as one crowned;
His voice shall gather in their ears
With each new age prophetic sound;
And you and I and all the rest,
Whose brows today are laurel-bound,
Shall be but plumes upon his crest.

A year ago this man was poor,—
This Alfred whom the nations praise;
He stood a beggar at my door
For one mere word to help him raise

From fainting limbs and shoulders bent
The burden of the weary days;
And I withheld it—and he went.

I knew him then, as I know now,
Our largest heart, our loftiest mind;
Yet for the curls upon his brow
And for his lisp, I could not find
The helping word, the cheering touch.
Ah, to be just, as well as kind,—
It costs so little and so much!

It seemed unmanly in my sight
That he, whose spirit was so strong
To lead the blind world to the light,
Should look so like the mincing throng
Who advertise the tailor's art.
It angered me—I did him wrong—
I grudged my groat and shut my heart.

I might have been the prophet's friend,
Helped him who is to help the world!
Now, when the striving is at end,
The reek-stained battle-banners furled,
And the age hears its muster-call,
Then I, because his hair was curled,
I shall have lost my chance—that's all.

A STEIN SONG

(*From "Spring"*)

Give a rouse, then, in the Maytime
  For a life that knows no fear!
Turn night-time into daytime
  With the sunlight of good cheer!
    For it's always fair weather
    When good fellows get together,
With a stein on the table and a good song ringing clear.

When the wind comes up from Cuba,
  And the birds are on the wing,
And our hearts are patting juba
  To the banjo of the spring,
      Then it's no wonder whether
      The boys will get together,
With a stein on the table and a cheer for everything.

For we're all frank-and-twenty
  When the spring is in the air;
And we've faith and hope a-plenty,
  And we've life and love to spare:
      And it's birds of a feather
      When we all get together,
With a stein on the table and a heart without a care.

For we know the world is glorious,
  And the goal a golden thing,
And that God is not censorious
  When his children have their fling;
      And life slips its tether
      When the boys get together,
With a stein on the table in the fellowship of spring.

MADISON CAWEIN

Madison (Julius) Cawein was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1865, and spent most of his life in the state of his birth. He wrote an enormous quantity of verse, publishing more than twenty volumes of pleasant, sometimes exuberant, but seldom distinguished, poetry. *Lyrics and Idyls* (1890) and *Vale of Tempe* (1905) contain his most characteristic stanzas, packed with the lush, adjectival love of Nature that led certain of his admirers to call him (and, one must admit, the alliteration was tempting) "the Keats of Kentucky."

Cawein's work divides itself into two distinct veins. In the one he dealt with the scenes and incidents of his mountain environment: the sag of an old house in the hills, the echoes of a feud, rumblings of the Ku Klux Klan, the ghastly details of a lynching. In his other mood (the one which unfortunately possessed him the greater part of the time) he spent page after page romanticizing Nature, touching up his already painted lilies, polishing his thinly plated artificialities until the base metal showed through. He pictured all outdoors with painstaking detail. And yet it is somehow unreal, prettified, remote. Every now and then, with an irritating frequency, he tries to transport his audience to a literary Fairyland; but the reader is quickly wearied by the almost interminable procession of fays, gnomes, nixies, elves, dryads, sprites, pucks and fauns—be they ever so lyrical.

In spite of Cawein's too profuse lyricism, several of his pieces will doubtless remain, though it is not likely that the survivors will be the sugared sweetmeats by which his champions (including William Dean Howells) set such store. Those which show signs of more than contemporary life are those in which the poet's fancy is natural rather than forced, restrained rather than urged to the limits of literary imagination.

Cawein died in Kentucky in 1914. His twenty volumes desperately need winnowing; a selected one-volume edition might lead to a new appraisal. It is doubtful whether any poetry ever belonged more definitely to the "literature of escape," most of it having been written during the nineteen years while Cawein was employed as cashier in a Kentucky gambling house.

SNOW

The moon, like a round device
On a shadowy shield of war,
Hangs white in a heaven of ice
With a solitary star.

The wind has sunk to a sigh,
And the waters are stern with frost;
And gray, in the eastern sky,
The last snow-cloud is lost.

White fields, that are winter-starved,
Black woods, that are winter-fraught,
Cold, harsh as a face death-carved
With the iron of some black thought.

THE MAN HUNT

The woods stretch wild to the mountain side,
And the brush is deep where a man may hide.

They have brought the bloodhounds up again
To the roadside rock where they found the slain.

They have brought the bloodhounds up, and they
Have taken the trail to the mountain way.

Three times they circled the trail and crossed,
And thrice they found it and thrice they lost.

Now straight through the pines and the underbrush
They follow the scent through the forest's hush.

And their deep-mouthed bay is a pulse of fear
In the heart of the wood that the man must hear.

The man who crouches among the trees
From the stern-faced men that follow these.

A huddle of rocks that the ooze has mossed—
And the trail of the hunted again is lost.

An upturned pebble; a bit of ground
A heel has trampled—the trail is found.

And the woods reëcho the bloodhounds' bay
As again they take to the mountain way.

A rock; a ribbon of road; a ledge,
With a pine-tree clutching its crumbling edge.

A pine, that the lightning long since clave,
Whose huge roots hollow a ragged cave.

A shout; a curse; and a face aghast,
And the human quarry is laired at last.

The human quarry, with clay-clogged hair
And eyes of terror, who waits them there;

That glares and crouches and rising then
Hurls clods and curses at dogs and men.

Until the blow of a gun-butt lays
Him stunned and bleeding upon his face.

A rope, a prayer, and an oak-tree near.
And a score of hands to swing him clear.

A grim black thing for the setting sun
And the moon and the stars to look upon.

THE WINDS

Those hewers of the clouds, the Winds,—that lair
At the four compass-points,—are out tonight;
I hear their sandals trample on the height,
I hear their voices trumpet through the air:
Builders of storm, God's workmen, now they bear
Up the steep stair of sky, on backs of might,
Huge tempest bulks, while—sweat that blinds their sight—
The rain is shaken from tumultuous hair:
Now, sweepers of the firmament, they broom
Like gathered dust, the rolling mists along
Heaven's floors of sapphire; all the beautiful blue
Of skyey corridor and celestial room—
Preparing, with large laughter and loud song,
For the white moon and stars to wander through.

DESERTED

The old house leans upon a tree
Like some old man upon a staff:
The night wind in its ancient porch
Sounds like a hollow laugh.

The heaven is wrapped in flying clouds
As grandeur cloaks itself in gray:
The starlight flitting in and out,
Glints like a lanthorn ray.

The dark is full of whispers. Now
A fox-hound howls: and through the night,
Like some old ghost from out its grave,
The moon comes misty white.

William Vaughn Moody was born in Spencer, Indiana, July 8, 1869, and was educated at Harvard. After graduation, he spent the remaining eighteen years of his life in travel and intensive study—he taught, for eight years, at the University of Chicago—his death coming at the very height of his creative power.

The Masque of Judgment, his first work, was published in 1900. A richer and more representative collection appeared the year following; in *Poems* (1901) Moody effected that mingling of challenging lyricism and spiritual philosophy which became more and more insistent. (See Preface.) Throughout his career, and particularly in such lines as the hotly expostulating "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines" and the majestic uncompleted "The Death of Eve," Moody successfully achieved the rare union of poet and preacher. "Gloucester Moors" was an outcry against the few exploiting the many; "The Quarry" and "An Ode in Time of Hesitation" were impassioned and prophetic. His last extended works had an epic quality which, with their too crowded details and difficult diction, effectually prevented them from becoming popular. Further, Moody did not offer a happy solution of life as was attempted by the vague socialism of Markham or the reckless optimism of Hovey; he maintained, rather, that men's spirits were "plagued, impatient things, all dream and unaccountable desire." Creation, he felt, was moving toward some far end, but he never presumed to know the goal, he would not even declare of our destiny, "I only know it shall be great." Man, to Moody, must make himself greater before he could claim to be the object of great purposes.

Of the lyrics woven in "The Fire-Bringer" most anthologists have preferred the song beginning:

> Of wounds and sore defeat
> I made my battle stay.

The one reprinted here has not only the virtue of being little known but seems to the present editor more typical of its author's spirit.

Moody's prose play *The Great Divide* (1907) was extremely successful when produced by Henry Miller. *The Faith Healer* (1909), another play in prose, because of its more exalted tone, did not win the favor of the theater-going public. A complete edition of *The Poems and Poetic Dramas of William Vaughn Moody* was published in 1912 in two volumes.

In the summer of 1909 Moody was stricken with the illness from which he never recovered. Had he lived he would probably have become one of the major poets of his country. He died in October, 1910.

PANDORA'S SONG

(*From "The Fire-Bringer*")

I stood within the heart of God;
It seemed a place that I had known:
(I was blood-sister to the clod,
Blood-brother to the stone.)

I found my love and labor there,
My house, my raiment, meat and wine,
My ancient rage, my old despair,—
Yea, all things that were mine.

I saw the spring and summer pass,
The trees grow bare, and winter come;
All was the same as once it was
Upon my hills at home.

Then suddenly in my own heart
I felt God walk and gaze about;
He spoke; his words seemed held apart
With gladness and with doubt.

"Here is my meat and wine," He said,
"My love, my toil, my ancient care;
Here is my cloak, my book, my bed,
And here my old despair.

"Here are my seasons: winter, spring,
Summer the same, and autumn spills
The fruits I look for; everything
As on my heavenly hills."

GLOUCESTER MOORS

A mile behind is Gloucester town
Where the fishing fleets put in,
A mile ahead the land dips down
And the woods and farms begin.

Here where the moors stretch free
In the high blue afternoon,
Are the marching sun and talking sea,
And the racing winds that wheel and flee
On the flying heels of June.

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,
Blue is the quaker-maid,
The wild geranium holds its dew
Long in the bowlder's shade.
Wax-red hangs the cup
From the huckleberry boughs,
In barberry bells the gray moths sup,
Or where the choke-cherry lifts high up
Sweet bowls for their carouse.

Parody of Paleface

Over the shelf of the sandy cove
Beach-peas blossom late.
By copse and cliff the swallows rove
Each calling to his mate.
Seaward the sea-gulls go,
And the land-birds all are here:
That green-gold flash was a vireo,
And yonder flame where the marsh-flags grow
Was a scarlet tanager.

This earth is not the steadfast place
We landsmen build upon;
From deep to deep she varies pace,
And while she comes is gone.
Beneath my feet I feel
Her smooth bulk heave and dip;
With velvet plunge and soft upreel
She swings and steadies to her keel
Like a gallant, gallant ship.
irony?

These summer clouds she sets for sail,
The sun is her masthead light,
She tows the moon like a pinnace frail
Where her phosphor wake churns bright.

Now hid, now looming clear,
On the face of the dangerous blue
The star fleets tack and wheel and veer,
But on, but on does the old earth steer
As if her port she knew.

earth.

God, dear God! Does she know her port,
Though she goes so far about?
Or blind astray, does she make her sport
To brazen and chance it out?
I watched when her captains passed:
She were better captainless.
Men in the cabin, before the mast,
But some were reckless and some aghast,
And some sat gorged at mess.

By her battened hatch I leaned and caught
Sounds from the noisome hold,—
Cursing and sighing of souls distraught
And cries too sad to be told.
Then I strove to go down and see;
But they said, "Thou art not of us!"
I turned to those on the deck with me
And cried, "Give help!" But they said, "Let be:
Our ship sails faster thus."

blood!

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue,
Blue is the quaker-maid,
The alder-clump where the brook comes through
Breeds cresses in its shade.
To be out of the moiling street Contrast!
With its swelter and its sin!
Who has given to me this sweet,
And given my brother dust to eat?
And when will his wage come in?

Scattering wide or blown in ranks,
Yellow and white and brown,
Boats and boats from the fishing banks
Come home to Gloucester town.

There is cash to purse and spend,
There are wives to be embraced,
Hearts to borrow and hearts to lend,
And hearts to take and keep to the end,—
O little sails, make haste!

But thou, vast outbound ship of souls,
What harbor town for thee?
What shapes, when thy arriving tolls,
Shall crowd the banks to see?
Shall all the happy shipmates then
Stand singing brotherly?
Or shall a haggard ruthless few
Warp her over and bring her to,
While the many broken souls of men
Fester down in the slaver's pen,
And nothing to say or do?

ROAD-HYMN FOR THE START

Leave the early bells at chime,
Leave the kindled hearth to blaze,
Leave the trellised panes where children linger out the waking-time,
Leave the forms of sons and fathers trudging through the misty ways,
Leave the sounds of mothers taking up their sweet, laborious days.

Pass them by! even while our soul
Yearns to them with keen distress.
Unto them a part is given; we will strive to see the whole.
Dear shall be the banquet table where their singing spirits press;
Dearer be our sacred hunger, and our pilgrim loneliness.

We have felt the ancient swaying
Of the earth before the sun,
On the darkened marge of midnight heard sidereal rivers playing;
Rash it was to bathe our souls there, but we plunged and all was done.
That is lives and lives behind us—lo, our journey is begun!

Careless where our face is set,
Let us take the open way,
What we are no tongue has told us: Errand-goers who forget?
Soldiers heedless of their harry? Pilgrim people gone astray?
We have heard a voice cry "Wander!" That was all we heard it say.

Ask no more: 'Tis much, 'tis much!
Down the road the day-star calls;
Touched with change in the wide heavens, like a leaf the frost winds touch,
Flames the failing moon a moment, ere it shrivels white and falls;
Hid aloft, a wild throat holdeth sweet and sweeter intervals.

Leave him still to ease in song
Half his little heart's unrest:
Speech is his, but we may journey toward the life for which we long.
God, who gives the bird its anguish, maketh nothing manifest,
But upon our lifted foreheads pours the boon of endless quest.

FROM "JETSAM"

Once at a simple turning of the way
I met God walking; and although the dawn
Was large behind Him, and the morning stars
Circled and sang about his face as birds
About the fieldward morning cottager,
My coward heart said faintly, "Let us haste!
Day grows and it is far to market-town."
Once where I lay in darkness after fight,
Sore smitten, thrilled a little thread of song
Searching and searching all my muffled sense
Until it shook sweet pangs through all my blood,
And I beheld one globed in ghostly fire
Singing, star-strong, her golden canticle;
And her mouth sang, "The hosts of Hate roll past,
A dance of dust-motes in the sliding sun;
Love's battle comes on the wide wings of storm,
From east to west one legion! Wilt thou strive?"

Then, since the splendor of her sword-bright gaze
Was heavy on me with yearning and with scorn,
My sick heart muttered, "Yea, the little strife,
Yet see, the grievous wounds! I fain would sleep."

O heart, shalt thou not once be strong to go
Where all sweet throats are calling, once be brave
To slake with deed thy dumbness? Let us go
The path her singing face looms low to point,
Pendulous, blanched with longing, shedding flames
Of silver on the brown grope of the flood;
For all my spirit's soilure is put by
And all my body's soilure, lacking now
But the last lustral sacrament of death
To make me clean for those near-searching eyes
That question yonder whether all be well,
And pause a little ere they dare rejoice.

Question and be thou answered, passionate face!
For I am worthy, worthy now at last
After so long unworth; strong now at last
To give myself to beauty and be saved.

ON A SOLDIER FALLEN IN THE PHILIPPINES[1]

Streets of the roaring town,
Hush for him; hush, be still!
He comes, who was stricken down
Doing the word of our will.
Hush! Let him have his state.
Give him his soldier's crown,
The grists of trade can wait
Their grinding at the mill.
But he cannot wait for his honor; now the trumpet has been blown.
Wreathe pride now for his granite brow, lay love on his breast of stone.

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[1] Compare the point of view expressed in Hovey's "Unmanifest Destiny" on page 139. This poem was likewise written at the time of the Spanish-American War.

Toll! Let the great bells toll
Till the clashing air is dim,
Did we wrong this parted soul?
We will make it up to him.
Toll! Let him never guess
What work we sent him to.
Laurel, laurel, yes.
He did what we bade him do.
Praise, and never a whispered hint but the fight he fought was good;
Never a word that the blood on his sword was his country's own heart's-blood.

A flag for a soldier's bier
Who dies that his land may live;
O banners, banners here,
That he doubt not nor misgive!
That he heed not from the tomb
The evil days draw near
When the nation robed in gloom
With its faithless past shall strive.
Let him never dream that his bullet's scream went wide of its island mark,
Home to the heart of his darling land where she stumbled and sinned in the dark.

GEORGE STERLING

George Sterling was born at Sag Harbor, New York, December 1, 1869, and educated at various private schools in the Eastern States. He moved to the Far West about 1895 and lived in California until, discouraged and dipsomaniac, he met death by his own hand in 1926.

Of Sterling's ten volumes of poetry, *The Testimony of the Suns* (1903), *A Wine of Wizardry* (1908) and *The House of Orchids and Other Poems* (1911) are the most characteristic. Ambrose Bierce was the first to hail Sterling with what now seems extravagant praise; he declared that *A Wine of Wizardry* contained some of the greatest lines in English poetry.

As the titles indicate, this is poetry of a flamboyant and rhetorical type, of luxuriant sentences and emotions decorated in "the grand manner." Yet Sterling added vigor to his ornate tropes. He was not always hurling suns about, sweeping the skies with orchids, strange gods and exotic stars. His extravagances, partly temperamental, partly climatic, are Californian—as he intended them to be. He was not at ease when attempting to curb his grandiose periods, but a few of his simpler verses, though not in his most familiar vein, show what Sterling might have accomplished with more discipline. The least memorable poems are not without a redeeming line.

A comprehensive *Selected Poems* was published in 1923.

THE BLACK VULTURE

Aloof upon the day's immeasured dome,
He holds unshared the silence of the sky.
Far down his bleak, relentless eyes descry
The eagle's empire and the falcon's home—
Far down, the galleons of sunset roam;
His hazards on the sea of morning lie;
Serene, he hears the broken tempest sigh
Where cold sierras gleam like scattered foam.

And least of all he holds the human swarm—
Unwitting now that envious men prepare
To make their dream and its fulfillment one,
When, poised above the caldrons of the storm,
Their hearts, contemptuous of death, shall dare
His roads between the thunder and the sun.

THE MASTER MARINER

My grandsire sailed three years from home
And slew unmoved the sounding whale:
Here on a windless beach I roam
And watch far out the hardy sail.

The lions of the surf that cry
Upon this lion-colored shore
On reefs of midnight met his eye:
He knew their fangs as I their roar.

My grandsire sailed uncharted seas,
And toll of all their leagues he took:
I scan the shallow bays at ease,
And tell their colors in a book.

The anchor-chains his music made
And wind in shrouds and running-gear:
The thrush at dawn beguiles my glade,
And once, 'tis said, I woke to hear.

My grandsire in his ample fist
The long harpoon upheld to men:
Behold obedient to my wrist
A gray gull's-feather for my pen!

Upon my grandsire's leathern cheek
Five zones their bitter bronze had set:
Some day their hazards I will seek,
I promise me at times. Not yet.

I think my grandsire now would turn
A mild but speculative eye
On me, my pen and its concern,
Then gaze again to sea—and sigh.

THE NIGHT OF GODS

Their mouths have drunken the eternal wine—
The draught that Baal in oblivion sips.
Unseen about their courts the adder slips,
Unheard the sucklings of the leopard whine;
The toad has found a resting-place divine,
And bloats in stupor between Ammon's lips.
O Carthage and the unreturning ships,
The fallen pinnacle, the shifting Sign!

Lo! when I hear from voiceless court and fane
Time's adoration of eternity,—
The cry of kingdoms past and gods undone,—
I stand as one whose feet at noontide gain
A lonely shore; who feels his soul set free,
And hears the blind sea chanting to the sun.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

Edwin Arlington Robinson was born December 22, 1869, in the village of Head Tide, Maine. When he was still a child, the

Robinson family moved to the nearby town of Gardiner, which figures prominently in Robinson's poetry as "Tilbury Town." In 1891 he entered Harvard College, leaving that institution in 1893. A little collection of verse (*The Torrent and the Night Before*) was privately printed in 1896 and the following year much of it was incorporated with other work in *The Children of the Night* (1897).

Somewhat later, Robinson was struggling in various capacities to make a living in New York, five years passing before the publication of *Captain Craig* (1902). This richly detailed narrative, recalling Browning's method, increased Robinson's audience and his work was brought to the attention of Theodore Roosevelt (then President of the United States), who became interested in the poet who was, at the time, earning a living as an inspector in the New York Subway, then in course of construction. In 1904, President Roosevelt offered him a clerkship in the New York Custom House. Robinson held this position from 1905 to 1910, leaving it the same year which marked the appearance of his volume, *The Town Down the River*. Robinson's three books, up to this time, showed his clean, firmly drawn quality, but, in spite of their excellences, they seem little more than a succession of preludes for the dynamic volume that was to establish him in the first rank of American poets. *The Man Against the Sky*, in many ways Robinson's fullest and most penetrating work, appeared in 1916. (See Preface.) This was followed by *The Three Taverns* (1920), a less arresting but equally concentrated, distinctively voiced collection of poems.

In all these books there is manifest a searching for truth, for the light beyond illusion. But Robinson's transcendentalism is no mere emotional escape; his temper subjects the slightest phrase to critical analysis, his intuitions are supported—or scrutinized—by a vigorous intellectuality. Purely as a psychological portrait painter, Robinson has given American literature an entire gallery of memorable figures: Richard Cory, who "glittered when he walked," gnawing his dark heart while he fluttered pulses with his apparent good fortune; Miniver Cheevy, frustrate dreamer, sighing "for what was not"; Aaron Stark, the miser with eyes "like little dollars in the dark"; the nameless mother in "The Gift of God," transmuting her mediocrity of a son into a shining demigod; Bewick Finzer, the wreck of wealth, coming for his pittance, "familiar as an old mistake, and futile as regret." Such sympathetic illuminations reveal Robinson's sensitive power, especially in his projection of the apparent failures of life. Indeed, much of Robinson's work seems a protest, a criticism by implication, of that type of standardized success which so much of the world worships. Frustration and defeat are like an organ-point heard below the varying music of his verse; failure is almost glorified in his pages.

Technically, Robinson is as precise as he is dexterous. He is, in company with Frost, a master of the slowly diminished ending. But he is capable of cadences as rich as that which ends "The Gift of God," as pungent as the climax of "Calvary," as brilliantly fanciful as the sestet of his sonnet, "The Sheaves," as muted but sustained as the finale of "Eros Turannos" which might have been composed by a more controlled Swinburne.

There is never a false image or a blurred line in any of his verses which, while adhering to the strictest models and executed according to traditional forms, are always fresh and surprising. It is interesting to observe how the smoothness of his rhymes, playing against the hard outlines of his verse, emphasizes the epigrammatic strength of poems like "The Gift of God," that magnificent modern ballad "John Gorham," "For a Dead Lady," and "The Master," one of the finest evocations of Lincoln which is, at the same time, a bitter commentary on the commercialism of the times and the "shopman's test of age and worth."

Robinson's blank verse is scarcely less individual. It is astringent, personal, packed with the instant. In "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford" we have the clearest and most human portrait of Shakespeare ever attempted; the lines run as fluently as good conversation, as inevitably as a perfect melody. In his reanimations of the Arthurian legends, *Merlin* (1917), *Launcelot* (1920), *Tristram* (1927), Robinson, shaming the tea-table idyls of Tennyson, has colored the tale with somber reflections of the collapse of old orders, the darkness of an age in ashes.

Avon's Harvest, which the author has called "a dime novel in verse," a study of a fear-haunted, hate-driven man, appeared in 1921. In the same year the Macmillan Company issued his *Collected Poems*, which received the Pulitzer Prize for 1921. Subsequent volumes strengthened his admirers' convictions and disproved any fears that Robinson might have "written himself out." *Roman Bartholow* (1923) is a single poem of almost two hundred pages; a dramatic and introspective narrative in blank verse. *The Man Who Died Twice* (1924), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for that year, is likewise one long poem: a tale which is a cross between a grotesque recital and inspired metaphysics. Curiously enough, the mixture is one of Robinson's greatest triumphs; none of his portraits, either miniatures or full-length canvases, has given us a profounder insight of a tortured soul than this of Fernando Nash, "the king who lost his crown before he had it."

Dionysus in Doubt (1925) begins and ends with a caustic arraignment of our mechanistic civilization, and is primarily a scornful and carefully premeditated condemnation of the Eighteenth Amendment, an attack which never descends to polemics or political diatribe. Robinson's ironic accents lift every phrase above the argumentative matter; the darkest of his doubts are illumined by "the salvage of a smile." Besides two other longish poems, this volume includes eighteen sonnets which again display Robinson's supremacy in the form. Technically astonishing, the values lie far beyond technique. Time and again, he packs huge scenes into fourteen lines; if sonnets can assume the proportion of dramatic narratives, Robinson's have achieved this almost impossible feat.

Possibly the fact that Robinson had already won the Pulitzer Prize twice, possibly the increasing interest of his work may have accounted for his increased audience. Not even his most enthusiastic admirers awaited the reception accorded to *Tristram* (1927). Adopted by the most prominent book-club as its "book-of-the-month," awarded unstinted praise and the Pulitzer Prize for the third time, it outsold most "best-selling" novels. This was something of a phenomenon, for *Tristram* was not only a single poem of over forty thousand words, it was Robinson's most intricate and knotted work. But it was no mere problem in involution; Robinson, as though reacting against the charge of Puritanism, abandoned himself to a drama passionate and headlong. Using the older version rather than Wagner's adaptation of the tragedy, the American poet expressed the self-torture of the mind and the catharsis of silence after turbulent speech.

Cavender's House (1929) was scarcely less esteemed. Formerly regarded as a poet's poet, the later volumes established Robinson in popular favor, no matter from what epoch he chose his theme. *Tristram* was medieval, *Cavender's House* was modern. Like *Avon's Harvest*, and *Roman Bartholow*, the latter was melodrama glorified, but sharper and tenser than its predecessors. Both renewed the inevitable—and false—comparisons. Robinson's manner was likened to Browning's, his matter (particularly in the Arthurian tales) to Tennyson's. The comparison to Browning, though superficial and inaccurate, is at least comprehensible. The author of *Merlin*, like the author of *Sordello*, delights in subtly psychological portraiture, in the half-withheld inner drama, in the shift of suspensions and nuances of tension. But where Browning is forthright, Robinson is tangential; where Browning is lavish with imagery and flaring interjections, Robinson is sparse in metaphor and so economic with words that almost every phrase seems twisted and wrung of everything except its essential meaning. (Actually, his lean sentences are rich in implications beyond their statements.) But the principal dissimilarity lies in their *Weltanschauung*; here they are diametrically opposed. Where Browning regards the universe compact of sweetness and light, Robinson observes a scheme whose chief components are bitterness and blight; the realm where "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world" becomes (as in the significantly entitled *The Man Against the Sky*) a place where

> He may go forward like a stoic Roman
> Where pangs and terrors in his pathway lie—
> Or, seizing the swift logic of a woman,
> Curse God and die.

Although Robinson was accused of holding consistently a negative attitude toward life, his poetry—and *Cavender's House* was only one instance—reveals a restless, uncertain but persistent search for moral values. This quest—and questioning—of ultimates runs through his work as it ran through an age no longer satisfied with arid skepticism. It is significant that the same year which disclosed Eliot turning to a faith beyond intellect showed Robinson driving past reason to find

> . . . There must be God; or if not God, a purpose and a law.

This desire for a deeper faith kept him plunging through a darkness which most of his contemporaries could not even face. The conclusion of his sonnet to Crabbe might well be applied to him:

> Whether or not we read him, we can feel
> From time to time the vigor of his name
> Against us like a finger for the shame
> And emptiness of what our souls reveal
> In books that are as altars where we kneel
> To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

Since 1911 Robinson has lived most of his summers at the MacDowell Colony at Peterborough, New Hampshire, spending his winters in Boston and New York. A new *Collected Poems*, containing the later longer works, was published in 1929.

MINIVER CHEEVY

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
  Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
  And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
And Priam's neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,
Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
And kept on drinking.

FOR A DEAD LADY

No more with overflowing light
Shall fill the eyes that now are faded,
Nor shall another's fringe with night
Their woman-hidden world as they did.

No more shall quiver down the days
The flowing wonder of her ways,
Whereof no language may requite
The shifting and the many-shaded.

The grace, divine, definitive,
Clings only as a faint forestalling;
The laugh that love could not forgive
Is hushed, and answers to no calling;
The forehead and the little ears
Have gone where Saturn keeps the years;
The breast where roses could not live
Has done with rising and with falling.

The beauty, shattered by the laws
That have creation in their keeping,
No longer trembles at applause,
Or over children that are sleeping;
And we who delve in beauty's lore
Know all that we have known before
Of what inexorable cause
Makes Time so vicious in his reaping.

CALVARY

Friendless and faint, with martyred steps and slow,
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free,
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,
The Master toiled along to Calvary;
We gibed him, as he went, with houndish glee,
Till his dimmed eyes for us did overflow;
We cursed his vengeless hands thrice wretchedly,—
And this was nineteen hundred years ago.
But after nineteen hundred years the shame
Still clings, and we have not made good the loss
That outraged faith has entered in his name.
Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!

THE MASTER[1]

(Lincoln. Supposed to have been written not long after the Civil War)

A flying word from here and there
Had sown the name at which we sneered,
But soon the name was everywhere,
To be reviled and then revered:
A presence to be loved and feared,
We cannot hide it, or deny
That we, the gentlemen who jeered,
May be forgotten by and by.

He came when days were perilous
And hearts of men were sore beguiled;
And having made his note of us,
He pondered and was reconciled.
Was ever master yet so mild
As he, and so untamable?
We doubted, even when he smiled,
Not knowing what he knew so well.

He knew that undeceiving fate
Would shame us whom he served unsought;
He knew that he must wince and wait—
The jest of those for whom he fought;
He knew devoutly what he thought
Of us and of our ridicule;
He knew that we must all be taught
Like little children in a school.

We gave a glamour to the task
That he encountered and saw through,
But little of us did he ask,
And little did we ever do.
And what appears if we review
The season when we railed and chaffed?
It is the face of one who knew
That we were learning while we laughed.

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[1] See pages 105, 189, 333, 334- 349, 354, 467.

The face that in our vision feels
Again the venom that we flung,
Transfigured to the world reveals
The vigilance to which we clung.
Shrewd, hallowed, harassed, and among
The mysteries that are untold,
The face we see was never young,
Nor could it ever have been old.

For he, to whom we had applied
Our shopman's test of age and worth,
Was elemental when he died,
As he was ancient at his birth:
The saddest among kings of earth,
Bowed with a galling crown, this man
Met rancor with a cryptic mirth,
Laconic—and Olympian.

The love, the grandeur, and the fame
Are bounded by the world alone;
The calm, the smoldering, and the flame
Of awful patience were his own:
With him they are forever flown
Past all our fond self-shadowings,
Wherewith we cumber the Unknown
As with inept Icarian wings.

For we were not as other men:
'Twas ours to soar and his to see.
But we are coming down again,
And we shall come down pleasantly;
Nor shall we longer disagree
On what it is to be sublime,
But flourish in our perigee
And have one Titan at a time.

AN OLD STORY

Strange that I did not know him then,
  That friend of mine.
I did not even show him then
  One friendly sign;

But cursed him for the ways he had
To make me see
My envy of the praise he had
For praising me.

I would have rid the earth of him
Once, in my pride.
I never knew the worth of him
Until he died.

RICHARD CORY

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

BEWICK FINZER

Time was when his half million drew
The breath of six per cent;
But soon the worm of what-was-not
Fed hard on his content;
And something crumbled in his brain
When his half million went.

Time passed, and filled along with his
The place of many more;
Time came, and hardly one of us
Had credence to restore,
From what appeared one day, the man
Whom we had known before.

The broken voice, the withered neck,
The coat worn out with care,
The cleanliness of indigence,
The brilliance of despair,
The fond imponderable dreams
Of affluence,—all were there.

Poor Finzer, with his dreams and schemes,
Fares hard now in the race,
With heart and eye that have a task
When he looks in the face
Of one who might so easily
Have been in Finzer's place.

He comes unfailing for the loan
We give and then forget;
He comes, and probably for years
Will he be coming yet,—
Familiar as an old mistake,
And futile as regret.

REUBEN BRIGHT

Because he was a butcher and thereby
Did earn an honest living (and did right)
I would not have you think that Reuben Bright
Was any more a brute than you or I;
For when they told him that his wife must die,
He stared at them and shook with grief and fright,
And cried like a great baby half that night,
And made the women cry to see him cry.

And after she was dead, and he had paid
The singers and the sexton and the rest,
He packed a lot of things that she had made
Most mournfully away in an old chest

Of hers, and put some chopped-up cedar boughs
In with them, and tore down the slaughter-house.

GEORGE CRABBE

Give him the darkest inch your shelf allows,
Hide him in lonely garrets, if you will,—
But his hard, human pulse is throbbing still
With the sure strength that fearless truth endows.
In spite of all fine science disavows,
Of his plain excellence and stubborn skill
There yet remains what fashion cannot kill,
Though years have thinned the laurel from his brows.

Whether or not we read him, we can feel
From time to time the vigor of his name
Against us like a finger for the shame
And emptiness of what our souls reveal
In books that are as altars where we kneel
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

LUKE HAVERGAL

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,
And in the twilight wait for what will come.
The leaves will whisper there of her, and some,
Like flying words, will strike you as they fall;
But go, and if you listen, she will call.
Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes;
But there, where western glooms are gathering,
The dark will end the dark, if anything:
God slays himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies—
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss
That flames upon your forehead with a glow
That blinds you to the way that you must go.
Yes, there is yet one way to where she is,
Bitter, but one that faith may never miss.
Out of a grave I come to tell you this—
To tell you this.

There is the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There are the crimson leaves upon the wall.
Go, for the winds are tearing them away,—
Nor think to riddle the dead words they say,
Nor any more to feel them as they fall;
But go, and if you trust her she will call.
There is the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

JOHN GORHAM

"Tell me what you're doing over here, John Gorham,
Sighing hard and seeming to be sorry when you're not;
Make me laugh or let me go now, for long faces in the moonlight
Are a sign for me to say again a word that you forgot."—

"I'm over here to tell you what the moon already
May have said or maybe shouted ever since a year ago;
I'm over here to tell you what you are, Jane Wayland,
And to make you rather sorry, I should say, for being so."—

"Tell me what you're saying to me now, John Gorham,
Or you'll never see as much of me as ribbons any more;
I'll vanish in as many ways as I have toes and fingers,
And you'll not follow far for one where flocks have been before."—

"I'm sorry now you never saw the flocks, Jane Wayland,
But you're the one to make of them as many as you need.
And then about the vanishing: It's I who mean to vanish;
And when I'm here no longer you'll be done with me indeed."—

"That's a way to tell me what I am, John Gorham!
How am I to know myself until I make you smile?
Try to look as if the moon were making faces at you,
And a little more as if you meant to stay a little while."—

"You are what it is that over rose-blown gardens
Makes a pretty flutter for a season in the sun;
You are what it is that with a mouse, Jane Wayland,
Catches him and lets him go and eats him up for fun."—

"Sure I never took you for a mouse, John Gorham;
All you say is easy, but so far from being true,
That I wish you wouldn't ever be again the one to think so;
For it isn't cats and butterflies that I would be to you."—

"All your little animals are in one picture—
One I've had before me since a year ago tonight;
And the picture where they live will be of you, Jane Wayland,
Till you find a way to kill them or to keep them out of sight."—

"Won't you ever see me as I am, John Gorham,
Leaving out the foolishness and all I never meant?
Somewhere in me there's a woman, if you know the way to find her.
Will you like me any better if I prove it and repent?"—

"I doubt if I shall ever have the time, Jane Wayland;
And I dare say all this moonlight lying round us might as well
Fall for nothing on the shards of broken urns that are forgotten,
As on two that have no longer much of anything to tell."

HOW ANNANDALE WENT OUT

"They called it Annandale—and I was there
To flourish, to find words, and to attend:
Liar, physician, hypocrite, and friend,
I watched him; and the sight was not so fair

As one or two that I have seen elsewhere:
An apparatus not for me to mend—
A wreck, with hell between him and the end,
Remained of Annandale; and I was there.

"I knew the ruin as I knew the man;
So put the two together, if you can,
Remembering the worst you know of me.
Now view yourself as I was, on the spot,
With a slight kind of engine. Do you see?
Like this . . . You wouldn't hang me? I thought not."

THE FIELD OF GLORY

War shook the land where Levi dwelt,
And fired the dismal wrath he felt,
That such a doom was ever wrought
As his, to toil while others fought;
To toil, to dream—and still to dream,
With one day barren as another;
To consummate, as it would seem,
The dry despair of his old mother.

Far off one afternoon began
The sound of man destroying man;
And Levi, sick with nameless rage,
Condemned again his heritage,
And sighed for scars that might have come,
And would, if once he could have sundered
Those harsh, inhering claims of home
That held him while he cursed and wondered.

Another day, and then there came,
Rough, bloody, ribald, hungry, lame,
But yet themselves, to Levi's door,
Two remnants of the day before.
They laughed at him and what he sought;
They jeered him and his painful acre;
But Levi knew that they had fought,
And left their manners to their Maker.

That night, for the grim widow's ears,
With hopes that hid themselves in fears,
He told of arms, and fiery deeds,
Whereat one leaps the while he reads,
And said he'd be no more a clown,
While others drew the breath of battle.
The mother looked him up and down,
And laughed—a scant laugh with a rattle.

She told him what she found to tell,
And Levi listened, and heard well
Some admonitions of a voice
That left him no cause to rejoice.—
He sought a friend, and found the stars,
And prayed aloud that they should aid him;
But they said not a word of wars,
Or of a reason why God made him.

And who's of this or that estate
We do not wholly calculate,
When baffling shades that shift and cling
Are not without their glimmering;
When even Levi, tired of faith,
Beloved of none, forgot by many,
Dismissed as an inferior wraith,
Reborn may be as great as any.

THE CLERKS

I did not think that I should find them there
When I came back again; but there they stood,
As in the days they dreamed of when young blood
Was in their cheeks and women called them fair.
Be sure they met me with an ancient air,—
And yes, there was a shop-worn brotherhood
About them; but the men were just as good,
And just as human as they ever were.

And you that ache so much to be sublime,
And you that feed yourselves with your descent,
What comes of all your visions and your fears?

Poets and kings are but the clerks of Time,
Tiering the same dull webs of discontent
Clipping the same sad alnage of the years.

THE DARK HILLS

Dark hills at evening in the west,
Where sunset hovers like a sound
Of golden horns that sang to rest
Old bones of warriors under ground,
Far now from all the bannered ways
Where flash the legions of the sun,
You fade—as if the last of days
Were fading and all wars were done.

EROS TURANNOS

She fears him, and will always ask
  What fated her to choose him;
She meets in his engaging mask
  All reasons to refuse him;
But what she meets and what she fears
Are less than are the downward years,
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
  Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity
  That once had power to sound him,
And Love, that will not let him be
  The Judas that she found him,
Her pride assuages her almost,
As if it were alone the cost.
He sees that he will not be lost.
  And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees
  Envelops and allures him;
Tradition, touching all he sees,
  Beguiles and reassures him;
And all her doubts of what he says
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—
Till even prejudice delays
  And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates
  The reign of her confusion;
The pounding wave reverberates
  The dirge of her illusion;
And home, where passion lived and died,
Becomes a place where she can hide,
While all the town and harbor-side
  Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
  The story as it should be,
As if the story of a house
  Were told, or ever could be;
We'll have no kindly veil between
Her visions and those we have seen,—
As if we guessed what hers have been,
  Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they
  That with a god have striven,
Not hearing much of what we say,
  Take what the god has given;
Though like waves breaking it may be,
Or like a changed familiar tree,
Or like a stairway to the sea
  Where down the blind are driven.

THE SHEAVES

Where long the shadows of the wind had rolled,
Green wheat was yielding to the change assigned;
And as by some vast magic undivined
The world was turning slowly into gold.
Like nothing that was ever bought or sold
It waited there, the body and the mind;
And with a mighty meaning of a kind
That tells the more the more it is not told.

So in a land where all days are not fair,
Fair days went on till on another day
A thousand golden sheaves were lying there,

Shining and still, but not for long to stay—
As if a thousand girls with golden hair
Might rise from where they slept and go away.

BEN JONSON ENTERTAINS A MAN FROM STRATFORD

You are a friend then, as I make it out,
Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us
Will put an ass's head in Fairyland
As he would add a shilling to more shillings,
All most harmonious—and out of his
Miraculous inviolable increase
Fills Ilion, Rome, or any town you like
Of olden time with timeless Englishmen;
And I must wonder what you think of him—
All you down there where your small Avon flows
By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.
Some, for a guess, would have him riding back
To be a farrier there, or say a dyer;
Or maybe one of your adept surveyors;
Or like enough the wizard of all tanners.
Not you—no fear of that; for I discern
In you a kindling of the flame that saves—
The nimble element, the true caloric;
I see it, and was told of it, moreover,
By our discriminate friend himself, no other.
Had you been one of the sad average,
As he would have it—meaning, as I take it,
The sinew and the solvent of our Island,
You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's
Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson;
He'd never foist it as a part of his
Contingent entertainment of a townsman
While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,
If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford.
And my words are no shadow on your town—
Far from it; for one town's like another
As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it—
And there's the Stratford in him; he denies it,
And there's the Shakespeare in him. So, God help him!

I tell him he needs Greek; but neither God
Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that man.
You see the fates have given him so much,
He must have all or perish—or look out
Of London, where he sees too many lords.
They're part of half what ails him: I suppose
There's nothing fouler down among the demons
Than what it is he feels when he remembers
The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling
With his lords looking on and laughing at him.
King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*,
And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;
He'd frame a lower rating of men then
Than he has now; and after that would come
An abdication or an apoplexy.
He can't be king, not even king of Stratford—
Though half the world, if not the whole of it,
May crown him with a crown that fits no king
Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:
Not there on Avon, or on any stream
Where Naiads and their white arms are no more
Shall he find home again. It's all too bad.
But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House—
The best you ever saw; and he'll be there
Anon, as you're an Alderman. Good God!
He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh.

And you have known him from his origin,
You tell me; and a most uncommon urchin
He must have been to the few seeing ones—
A trifle terrifying, I dare say,
Discovering a world with his man's eyes,
Quite as another lad might see some finches,
If he looked hard and had an eye for Nature.
But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,
And he had you to fare with, and what else?
He must have had a father and a mother—
In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,
As a boy should, I venture; and the dog,
Most likely, was the only man who knew him.
A dog, for all I know, is what he needs

As much as anything right here today,
To counsel him about his disillusions,
Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming—
A dog of orders, an emeritus,
To wag his tail at him when he comes home,
And then to put his paws up on his knees
And say, "For God's sake, what's it all about?"

I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—
Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek;
I'll talk of rules and Aristotle with him,
And if his tongue's at home he'll say to that,
"I have your word that Aristotle knows,
And you mine that I don't know Aristotle."
He's all at odds with all the unities,
And what's yet worse it doesn't seem to matter;
He treads along through Time's old wilderness
As if the tramp of all the centuries
Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;
He doesn't see them, even with those eyes—
And that's a pity, or I say it is.
Accordingly we have him as we have him—
Going his way, the way that he goes best,
A pleasant animal with no great noise
Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—
Save only divers and inclement devils
Have made of late his heart their dwelling-place.
A flame half ready to fly out sometimes
At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,
But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;
He knows how little room there is in there
For crude and futile animosities,
And how much for the joy of being whole,
And how much for long sorrow and old pain.
On our side there are some who may be given
To grow old wondering what he thinks of us
And some above us, who are, in his eyes,
Above himself—and that's quite right and English.
Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods
Who made it so; the gods have always eyes
To see men scratch; and they see one down here

Who itches, manor-bitten, to the bone,
Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—
The lord of more than England and of more
Than all the seas of England in all time
Shall ever wash. D'ye wonder that I laugh?
He sees me, and he doesn't seem to care;
And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.
I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,
Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.
"What, ho, my lord!" say I. He doesn't hear me;
Wherefore I have to pause and look at him.
He's not enormous, but one looks at him.
A little on the round if you insist,
For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;
He's five and forty, and to hear him talk
These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add
More years to that. He's old enough to be
The father of a world, and so he is.
"Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?"
Says he; and there shines out of him again
An aged light that has no age or station—
The mystery that's his—a mischievous
Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame
For being won so easy, and at friends
Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,
And for his dukedom down in Warwickshire;—
By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .
Poor Greene! I fear the color of his name
Was even as that of his ascending soul;
And he was one where there are many others—
Some scrivening to the end against their fate,
Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;
And some with hands that once would shade an eye
That scanned Euripides and Aeschylus
Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop
To slush their first and last of royalties.
Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;
For so it was in Athens and old Rome.
But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.
Greene does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?

Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him?
Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.
We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,
Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;
And then we'll think of what he never said
Of women—which, if taken all in all
With what he did say, would buy many horses.
Though nowadays he's not so much for women.
"So few of them," he says, "are worth the guessing."
But there's a worm at work when he says that,
And while he says it one feels in the air
A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.
They've had him dancing till his toes were tender,
And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.
There's no long cry for going into it,
However, and we don't know much about it.
But you in Stratford, like most here in London,
Have more now in the *Sonnets* than you paid for;
He's put one there with all her poison on,
To make a singing fiction of a shadow
That's in his life a fact, and always will be.
But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,
Will have a more reverberant ado
About her than about another one
Who seems to have decoyed him, married him,
And sent him scuttling on his way to London—
With much already learned, and more to learn,
And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,
Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.
Whatever he may have meant, we never had him;
He failed us, or escaped, or what you will—
And there was that about him (God knows what—
We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)
That made as many of us as had wits
More fond of all his easy distances
Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder.
But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!
Talk? He was eldritch at it; and we listened—
Thereby acquiring much we knew before
About ourselves, and hitherto had held
Irrelevant, or not prime to the purpose.

And there were some, of course, and there be now,
Disordered and reduced amazedly
To resignation by the mystic seal
Of young finality the gods had laid
On everything that made him a young demon;
And one or two shot looks at him already
As he had been their executioner;
And once or twice he was, not knowing it—
Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay
And saying nothing . . . Yet, for all his engines,
You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon
Who strut and sun themselves and see around 'em
A world made out of more that has a reason
Than his, I swear, that he sees here today;
Though he may scarcely give a Fool an exit
But we mark how he sees in everything
A law that, given that we flout it once too often,
Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.
To me it looks as if the power that made him,
For fear of giving all things to one creature,
Left out the first—faith, innocence, illusion,
Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam—
And thereby, for his too consuming vision,
Empowered him out of nature; though to see him,
You'd never guess what's going on inside him.
He'll break out some day like a keg of ale
With too much independent frenzy in it;
And all for cellaring what he knows won't keep,
And what he'd best forget—but that he can't.
You'll have it, and have more than I'm foretelling;
And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe
As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.
He'll have to change the color of its hair
A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra.
Black hair would never do for Cleopatra.
But you and I are not yet two old women,
And you're a man of office. What he does
Is more to you than how it is he does it—
And that's what the Lord God has never told him.
They work together, and the Devil helps 'em;
They do it of a morning, or if not,

They do it of a night; in which event
He's peevish of a morning. He seems old;
He's not the proper stomach or the sleep—
And they're two sovran agents to conserve him
Against the fiery art that has no mercy
But what's in that prodigious grand new House.
I gather something happening in his boyhood
Fulfilled him with a boy's determination
To make all Stratford 'ware of him. Well, well,
I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,
And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing beeves,
And frogs and owls and unicorns, moreover,
Be less than hell to his attendant ears.
Oh, past a doubt we'll all go down to see him.

He may be wise. With London two days off,
Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive him,
But there's no quickening breath from anywhere
Shall make of him again the young poised faun
From Warwickshire, who'd made, it seems, already
A legend of himself before I came
To blink before the last of his first lightning.
Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that;
The coming on of his old monster Time
Has made him a still man; and he has dreams
Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow.
He knows how much of what men paint themselves
Would blister in the light of what they are;
He sees how much of what was great now shares
An eminence transformed and ordinary;
He knows too much of what the world has hushed
In others, to be loud now for himself;
He knows now at what height low enemies
May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall;
But what not even such as he may know
Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing
At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long
As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,
Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little
Before the churchyard has it, and the worm.

Not long ago, late in an afternoon,
I came on him unseen down Lambeth way,
And on my life I was afear'd of him:
He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from Tophet,
His hands behind him and his head bent solemn.
"What is it now," said I, "another woman?"
That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.
"No, Ben," he mused; "it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;
Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other—
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done."
"By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!"
Said I, by way of cheering him; "what ails ye?"
"I think I must have come down here to think,"
Says he to that, and pulls his little beard;
"Your fly will serve as well as anybody,
And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
And then your spider gets him in her net,
And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry.
That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,
And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
It's all a world where bugs and emperors
Go singularly back to the same dust,
Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
Old stave tomorrow."

When he talks like that,
There's nothing for a human man to do
But lead him to some grateful nook like this
Where we be now, and there to make him drink.
He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;
A sad sign always in a man of parts,
And always very ominous. The great
Should be as large in liquor as in love—
And our great friend is not so large in either:
One disaffects him, and the other fails him;
Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it,

He's wondering what's to pay in his insides;
And while his eyes are on the Cyprian
He's fribbling all the time with that damned House.
We laugh here at his thrift, but after all
It may be thrift that saves him from the devil;
God gave it, anyhow—and we'll suppose
He knew the compound of His handiwork.
Today the clouds are with him, but anon
He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree
Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of—
And, throwing in the bruised and whole together,
Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;
And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell
Thrown over him as over a glassed lake
That yesterday was all a black wild water.

God send he live to give us, if no more,
What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,
With a decent half-allegiance to the ages
An earnest of at least a casual eye
Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,
And to the fealty of more centuries
Than are as yet a picture in our vision.
"There's time enough—I'll do it when I'm old,
And we're immortal men," he says to that;
And then he says to me, "Ben, what's 'immortal'?
Think you by any force of ordination
It may be nothing of a sort more noisy
Than a small oblivion of component ashes
That of a dream-addicted world was once
A moving atomy much like your friend here?"
Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh
I said then he was a mad mountebank—
And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.
I could have eat an eft then, on my knees,
Tails, claws, and all of him; for I had stung
The king of men, who had no sting for me,
And I had hurt him in his memories;
And I say now, as I shall say again,
I love the man this side idolatry.
He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder.

He may not be so ancient as all that.
For such as he the thing that is to do
Will do itself—but there's a reckoning;
The sessions that are now too much his own,
The roiling inward of a still outside,
The churning out of all those blood-fed lines,
The nights of many schemes and little sleep,
The full brain hammered hot with too much thinking,
The vexed heart over-worn with too much aching—
This weary jangling of conjoined affairs
Made out of elements that have no end,
And all confused at once, I understand,
Is not what makes a man to live forever.
O, no, not now! He'll not be going now:
There'll be time yet for God knows what explosions
Before he goes. He'll stay awhile. Just wait:
Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,
For she's to be a balsam and a comfort;
And that's not all a jape of mine now, either.
For granted once the old way of Apollo
Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able,
Strike unafraid whatever strings he will
Upon the last and wildest of new lyres;
Nor out of his new magic, though it hymn
The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create
A madness or a gloom to shut quite out
A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm
Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms.
He might have given Aristotle creeps,
But surely would have given him his *katharsis*.
He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet
Unsung within the man. But when he goes,
I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care
For a phantom world he sounded and found wanting
Will be a portion here, a portion there,
Of this or that thing or some other thing
That has a patent and intrinsical
Equivalence in those egregious shillings.
And yet he knows, God help him! Tell me, now,
If ever there was anything let loose
On earth by gods or devils heretofore

Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent Shakespeare!
Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,
'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—
In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this!
No thing like this was ever out of England;
And that he knows. I wonder if he cares.
Perhaps he does. . . . O Lord, that House in Stratford!

NEW ENGLAND

Here where the wind is always north-north-east
And children learn to walk on frozen toes,
Wonder begets an envy of all those
Who boil elsewhere with such a lyric yeast
Of love that you will hear them at a feast
Where demons would appeal for some repose,
Still clamoring where the chalice overflows
And crying wildest who have drunk the least.

Passion is here a soilure of the wits,
We're told, and Love a cross for them to bear;
Joy shivers in the corner where she knits
And Conscience always has the rocking-chair,
Cheerful as when she tortured into fits
The first cat that was ever killed by Care.

THE GIFT OF GOD

Blessed with a joy that only she
Of all alive shall ever know,
She wears a proud humility
For what it was that willed it so,—
That her degree should be so great
Among the favored of the Lord
That she may scarcely bear the weight
Of her bewildering reward.

As one apart, immune, alone,
Or featured for the shining ones,
And like to none that she has known
Of other women's other sons,—

The firm fruition of her need,
He shines anointed; and he blurs
Her vision, till it seems indeed
A sacrilege to call him hers.

She fears a little for so much
Of what is best, and hardly dares
To think of him as one to touch
With aches, indignities, and cares;
She sees him rather at the goal,
Still shining; and her dream foretells
The proper shining of a soul
Where nothing ordinary dwells.

Perchance a canvass of the town
Would find him far from flags and shouts,
And leave him only the renown
Of many smiles and many doubts;
Perchance the crude and common tongue
Would havoc strangely with his worth;
But she, with innocence unwrung,
Would read his name around the earth.

And others, knowing how this youth
Would shine, if love could make him great,
When caught and tortured for the truth
Would only writhe and hesitate;
While she, arranging for his days
What centuries could not fulfill,
Transmutes him with her faith and praise,
And has him shining where she will.

She crowns him with her gratefulness,
And says again that life is good;
And should the gift of God be less
In him than in her motherhood,
His fame, though vague, will not be small,
As upward through her dream he fares,
Half clouded with a crimson fall
Of roses thrown on marble stairs.

THE PRODIGAL SON

You are not merry, brother. Why not laugh,
As I do, and acclaim the fatted calf?
For, unless ways are changing here at home,
You might not have it if I had not come.
And were I not a thing for you and me
To execrate in anguish, you would be
As indigent a stranger to surprise,
I fear, as I was once, and as unwise.
Brother, believe as I do, it is best
For you that I'm again in the old nest—
Draggled, I grant you, but your brother still,
Full of good wine, good viands, and good will.
You will thank God, some day, that I returned,
And may be singing for what you have learned,
Some other day; and one day you may find
Yourself a little nearer to mankind.
And having hated me till you are tired,
You will begin to see, as if inspired,
It was fate's way of educating us.
Remembering then when you were venomous,
You will be glad enough that I am gone,
But you will know more of what's going on;
For you will see more of what makes it go,
And in more ways than are for you to know.
We are so different when we are dead,
That you, alive, may weep for what you said;
And I, the ghost of one you could not save,
May find you planting lentils on my grave.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

Edgar Lee Masters was born at Garnett, Kansas, August 23, 1869, of Puritan and pioneering stock. When he was still a boy, the family moved to Illinois, where, after desultory schooling, he studied law in his father's office at Lewiston. For a year he practiced with his father and then went to Chicago, where he became a successful attorney.

Before going to Chicago, Masters had composed a quantity of rhymed verse in traditional forms on traditional themes; by the time he was twenty-four he had written about four hundred poems, revealing the result of wide reading and betraying the influence of Poe, Keats, Shelley and Swinburne. His work, previous to the publication of *Spoon River Anthology*, was derivative and undistinguished. In 1895 he wrote a blank verse play on Benedict Arnold. In 1898 he published *A Book of Verses*, a selection of some sixty of the early four hundred. In 1902 *Maximilian*, another blank verse play, appeared, causing no more comment than the others. Nothing daunted, Masters published several volumes in rapid succession (three books of poetry appearing, under various pseudonyms, between 1905 and 1912), *The New Star Chamber and Other Essays* (1904), *Blood of the Prophets* (1905), *Althea*, a play (1907), *The Trifler*, another play (1908).

In 1914, Masters, at the suggestion of his friend, William Marion Reedy, turned from his preoccupation with classic subjects and began to draw upon the life he knew for those concise records which made him famous. Taking as his model *The Greek Anthology*, which Reedy had pressed upon him, Masters evolved *Spoon River Anthology*, that astonishing assemblage of over two hundred self-inscribed epitaphs, in which the dead of a middle Western town are supposed to have written the truth about themselves. Through these frank revelations, many of them interrelated, the village is recreated for us; it lives again, unvarnished and typical, with all its intrigues, hypocrisies, feuds, martyrdoms and occasional exaltations. The monotony of existence in a drab township, the defeat of ideals, the struggle toward higher goals are synthesized in these crowded pages. All moods and all manner of voices are heard here—even Masters', who explains the reason for his medium and the selection of his form through "Petit, the Poet."

The success of the volume was extraordinary. (See Preface.) With every new attack (and its frankness continued to make fresh enemies) its readers increased; it was imitated, parodied, reviled as "a piece of yellow journalism"; hailed as "an American Comédie Humaine." Finally, after the storm of controversy, it has taken its place as a landmark in American literature.

With *Spoon River Anthology* Masters arrived—and left. He went back to his first rhetorical style, resurrecting many of his earlier trifles, reprinting dull echoes of Tennyson, imitations of Shelley, archaic paraphrases in the manner of Swinburne. Yet though none of Masters' subsequent volumes can be compared to his masterpiece, all of them contain examples of the same straightforwardness, the stubborn searching that intensified his best-known characterizations.

Songs and Satires (1916) contains the startling "All Life in a

Life" and the gravely moving "Silence." *The Great Valley* (1916) is packed with echoes and a growing dependence on Browning. In *Toward the Gulf* (1918), the Browning influence predominates, although there are such splendid individual monologues as "The World Saver," "St. Deseret" and "Front the Ages with a Smile." *Starved Rock* (1919), *Domesday Book* (1920) and *The New Spoon River* (1924) are, like all Masters' later books, queerly assembled mixtures of good, bad and derivative verse in which, though the aim is cosmic, the language is pretentious and prosy. These volumes prepared us for the novels which, in their mixture of sharp concept and dull writing, were as uneven as his verse. *The Fate of the Jury* (1929) is a continuation of *Domesday Book* with its mechanics suggested by *The Ring and the Book*, large in outline, feeble in detail. And yet, for all this poet's borrowings, in spite of his repetitions and disillusions, Masters' work is a continual if irritable quest for some key to the mystery of truth and mastery of life. And there is always that milestone, the original *Spoon River Anthology*.

PETIT, THE POET

Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel—
Faint iambics that the full breeze wakens—
But the pine tree makes a symphony thereof.
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus.
Ballades by the score with the same old thought:
The snows and the roses of yesterday are vanished;
And what is love but a rose that fades?
Life all around me here in the village:
Tragedy, comedy, valor and truth,
Courage, constancy, heroism, failure—
All in the loom, and, oh, what patterns!
Woodlands, meadows, streams and rivers—
Blind to all of it all my life long.
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambics,
While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines!

LUCINDA MATLOCK

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.

One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
And then I found Davis.
We were married and lived together for seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.

ANNE RUTLEDGE[1]

Out of me unworthy and unknown
The vibrations of deathless music:
"With malice toward none, with charity for all."
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,
And the beneficent face of a nation
Shining with justice and truth.
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,
Wedded to him, not through union,
But through separation.
Bloom forever, O Republic,
From the dust of my bosom!

SILENCE

I have known the silence of the stars and of the sea,
And the silence of the city when it pauses,

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[1] See pages 105, 163, 333, 334, 349, 354, 467.

And the silence of a man and a maid,
And the silence for which music alone finds the word,
And the silence of the woods before the winds of spring begin,
And the silence of the sick
When their eyes roam about the room.
And I ask: For the depths
Of what use is language?
A beast of the field moans a few times
When death takes its young.
And we are voiceless in the presence of realities—
We cannot speak.

A curious boy asks an old soldier
Sitting in front of the grocery store,
"How did you lose your leg?"
And the old soldier is struck with silence,
Or his mind flies away
Because he cannot concentrate it on Gettysburg.
It comes back jocosely
And he says, "A bear bit it off."
And the boy wonders, while the old soldier
Dumbly, feebly lives over
The flashes of guns, the thunder of cannon,
The shrieks of the slain,
And himself lying on the ground,
And the hospital surgeons, the knives,
And the long days in bed.
But if he could describe it all
He would be an artist.
But if he were an artist there would be deeper wounds
Which he could not describe.

There is the silence of a great hatred,
And the silence of a great love,
And the silence of a deep peace of mind,
And the silence of an embittered friendship,
There is the silence of a spiritual crisis,
Through which your soul, exquisitely tortured,
Comes with visions not to be uttered
Into a realm of higher life.
And the silence of the gods who understand each other without
speech,

There is the silence of defeat.
There is the silence of those unjustly punished;
And the silence of the dying whose hand
Suddenly grips yours.
There is the silence between father and son,
When the father cannot explain his life,
Even though he be misunderstood for it.

There is the silence that comes between husband and wife.
There is the silence of those who have failed;
And the vast silence that covers
Broken nations and vanquished leaders.
There is the silence of Lincoln,
Thinking of the poverty of his youth.
And the silence of Napoleon
After Waterloo.
And the silence of Jeanne d'Arc
Saying amid the flames, "Blessèd Jesus"—
Revealing in two words all sorrow, all hope.
And there is the silence of age,
Too full of wisdom for the tongue to utter it
In words intelligible to those who have not lived
The great range of life.

And there is the silence of the dead.
If we who are in life cannot speak
Of profound experiences,
Why do you marvel that the dead
Do not tell you of death?
Their silence shall be interpreted
As we approach them.

STEPHEN CRANE

Stephen Crane, whose literary career was one of the most meteoric in American letters, was born in Newark, New Jersey, November 1, 1871. After taking a partial course at Lafayette College, he entered journalism at sixteen and, until the time of his death, was a reporter and writer of newspaper sketches. When he died prematurely, at the age of thirty, he had ten printed volumes to his credit, two more announced for publication, and two others which were appearing serially.

Crane's most famous novel, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), was a *tour de force,* written when he was twenty-two years old. What is even more astonishing is the fact that this detailed description of blood and battlefields was written by a civilian far from the scene of conflict. This novel (Crane's second) was an instantaneous and international success. *The Atlantic Monthly* pronounced it "great enough to set a new fashion in literature"; H. G. Wells, speaking of its influence in England, said Crane was "the first expression of the opening mind of a new period . . . a record of intensity beyond all precedent."

Crane's other books, although less powerful than *The Red Badge of Courage,* are scarcely less vivid. *The Open Boat* (1898) and *The Monster* (1899) are full of an intuitive wisdom and a passionate sensitivity that caused Wells to exclaim, "The man who can call these 'brilliant fragments' would reproach Rodin for not 'completing' his fragments."

At various periods in Crane's brief career, he experimented in verse, seeking to find new effects in unrhymed lines, a new acuteness of vision. The results were embodied in two volumes of unusual poetry—*The Black Riders* (1895) and *War Is Kind* (1899), lines that strangely anticipated the Imagists and the epigrammatic free verse that followed fifteen years later. Acidulous and biting, these elliptical concisions were unappreciated in his day; Crane's suggestive verse has not yet received its due in an age which employs its very technique. But it was forty years before Emily Dickinson won her rightful audience, and a quarter of a century passed before a publisher risked a *Complete Works of Stephen Crane.* It was not until 1930 that a *Collected Poems* appeared.

Besides novels, short stories and poems, Crane was writing, at the time of his death, descriptions of the world's great battles for *Lippincott's Magazine;* his droll *Whilomville Stories* for boys were appearing in *Harper's Monthly,* and he was beginning a series of similar stories for girls. It is more than probable that this feverish energy of production aggravated the illness that caused Crane's death. He reached his refuge in the Black Forest only to die at the journey's end, June 5, 1900.

I SAW A MAN

I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
Round and round they sped.
I was disturbed at this;
I accosted the man.
"It is futile," I said,
"You can never—"

"You lie," he cried,
And ran on.

THE WAYFARER

The wayfarer,
Perceiving the pathway to truth,
Was struck with astonishment.
It was thickly grown with weeds.
"Ha," he said,
"I see that no one has passed here
In a long time."
Later he saw that each weed
Was a singular knife.
"Well," he mumbled at last,
"Doubtless there are other roads."

HYMN

A slant of sun on dull brown walls,
A forgotten sky of bashful blue.

Toward God a mighty hymn,
A song of collisions and cries,
Rumbling wheels, hoof-beats, bells,
Welcomes, farewells, love-calls, final moans,
Voices of joy, idiocy, warning, despair,
The unknown appeals of brutes,
The chanting of flowers,
The screams of cut trees,
The senseless babble of hens and wise men—
A cluttered incoherency that says to the stars:
"O God, save us!"

THE BLADES OF GRASS

In Heaven,
Some little blades of grass
Stood before God.
"What did you do?"
Then all save one of the little blades

Began eagerly to relate
The merits of their lives.
This one stayed a small way behind,
Ashamed.

Presently, God said,
"And what did you do?"
The little blade answered, "Oh, my Lord,
Memory is bitter to me,
For, if I did good deeds,
I know not of them."
Then God, in all his splendor,
Arose from his throne.
"Oh, best little blade of grass!" he said.

THE BOOK OF WISDOM

I met a seer.
He held in his hands
The book of wisdom.
"Sir," I addressed him,
"Let me read."
"Child—" he began.
"Sir," I said,
"Think not that I am a child,
For already I know much
Of that which you hold;
Aye, much."

He smiled.
Then he opened the book
And held it before me.
Strange that I should have grown so suddenly blind.

THE CANDID MAN

Forth went the candid man
And spoke freely to the wind—
When he looked about him he was in a far strange country.

Forth went the candid man
And spoke freely to the stars—
Yellow light tore sight from his eyes.

"My good fool," said a learned bystander,
"Your operations are mad."

"You are too candid," cried the candid man.
And when his stick left the head of the learned bystander
It was two sticks.

THE HEART

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;
"But I like it
Because it is bitter,
And because it is my heart."

EDWIN FORD PIPER

Edwin Ford Piper was born at Auburn, Nebraska, February 8, 1871, and literally grew up in the saddle. In 1893 he entered the University of Nebraska, from which he received an A.B. in 1897 and an A.M. in 1900. He studied at Harvard (1903-4), was one of the editors of *The Kiote* (a magazine published from 1898 to 1902 in Lincoln, Nebraska), and, since 1905, has been an instructor of English at the State University of Iowa.

Piper's *Barbed Wire and Other Poems* (1918) is saturated with the color of his environment. His later poems are equally vivid and racy. "Sweetgrass Range" (with its self-acknowledged debt to Burns' "Rattlin' Roarin' Willie") and "Bindlestiff" are fresh evidences of this author's creative interest in ballads and folk-lore.

BINDLESTIFF

Oh, the lives of men, lives of men,
  In pattern-molds be run;
But there's you, and me, and Bindlestiff—
  And remember Mary's Son.

At dawn the hedges and the wheel-ruts ran
Into brightening sky. The grass bent low
With shimmering dew, and many a late wild rose
Unrolled the petals from its odorous heart
While birds held tuneful gossip. Suddenly,
Each bubbling trill and whistle hid away
As from a hawk; the fragrant silence heard
Only the loving stir of little leaves;
Then a man's baritone broke roughly in:

I've gnawed my crust of moldy bread,
Skimmed my mulligan stew;
Laid beneath the barren hedge—
Sleety night-winds blew.

Slanting rain chills my bones,
Sun bakes my skin;
Rocky road for my limping feet,
Door where I can't go in.

Above the hedgerow floated filmy smoke
From the hidden singer's fire. Once more the voice:

I used to burn the mules with the whip
When I worked on the grading gang;
But the boss was a crook and he docked my pay—
Some day that boss will hang.

I used to live in a six by nine,
Try to save my dough—
It's a bellyful of the chaff of life,
Feet that up and go.

The mesh of leafy branches rustled loud,
Into the road slid Bindlestiff. You've seen
The like of the traveler: gaunt humanity
In stained and broken coat, with untrimmed hedge
Of rusty beard and curling sunburnt hair;
His hat, once white, a dull uncertain cone;
His leathery hands and cheeks, his bright blue eyes
That always see new faces and strange dogs;
His mouth that laughs at life and at himself.

Sometimes they shut you up in jail—
Dark, and a filthy cell;
I hope the fellows built them jails
Find 'em down in hell.

But up above, you can sleep outdoors—
Feed you like a king;
You never have to saw no wood,
Only job is sing.

The tones came mellower, as unevenly
The tramp limped off trailing the hobo song:

Good-by, farewell to Omaha,
K. C., and Denver, too;
Put my foot on the flying freight,
Going to ride her through.

Bindlestiff topped a hillock, against the sky
Showed stick and bundle with his extra shoes
Jauntily dangling. Bird to bird once more
Made low sweet answer; in the wild rose cups
The bee found yellow meal; all softly moved
The white and purple morning-glory bells
As on the gently rustling hedgetop leaves
The sun's face rested. Bindlestiff was gone.

Oh, the lives of men, lives of men,
In pattern-molds be run;
But there's you, and me, and Bindlestiff—
And remember Mary's Son.

SWEETGRASS RANGE

Come sell your pony, cowboy—
Sell your pony to me;
Braided bridle and your puncher saddle,
And spend your money free.

"If I should sell my pony,
And ride the range no more,
Nail up my hat and my silver spurs
Above my shanty door;

"And let my door stand open wide
To the snow and the rain and sun;
And bury me under the green sweetgrass
Where you hear the river run."

As I came down the sweetgrass range
And by the cabin door,
I heard a singing in the early dusk
Along the river shore;

I heard a singing to the early stars,
And the tune of a pony's feet.
The joy of the riding singer
I never shall forget.

T. A. DALY

Thomas Augustine Daly was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 28, 1871. He attended Villanova College and Fordham University (1889), leaving there at the end of his sophomore year to become a newspaper man. Since 1891 he has been on the staff of various Philadelphia journals, writing reviews, editorials, travel-notes and, chiefly, running the columns in which his verse originally appeared.

Canzoni (1906) and *Carmina* (1909) contain the best known of Daly's varied dialect verse. Although he has written in half a dozen different idioms including "straight" English (*vide Songs of Wedlock,* 1916), his half-humorous, half-pathetic interpretations of the Irish and Italian immigrants are his *forte.* "Mia Carlotta" and "Between Two Loves" rank with the best dialect rhyming of the period; "The Song of the Thrush," though less laugh-provoking, is a more personal communication.

Seldom descending to caricature, Daly exhibits the foibles of his characters without exploiting them; even the lightest passages in *McAroni Ballads* (1919) are done with delicacy and a not too sentimental appreciation. Less popular than Riley or Dunbar, Daly is more skillful and versatile than either; his range and quality are comparable to Field's.

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH

Ah! the May was grand this mornin'!
Shure, how could I feel forlorn in

Such a land, when tree and flower tossed their kisses to the
breeze?
Could an Irish heart be quiet
While the Spring was runnin' riot,
An' the birds of free America were singin' in the trees?
In the songs that they were singin'
No familiar note was ringin',
But I strove to imitate them an' I whistled like a lad.
Oh, my heart was warm to love them
For the very newness of them—
For the ould songs that they helped me to forget—an' I was
glad.

So I mocked the feathered choir
To my hungry heart's desire,
An' I gloried in the comradeship that made their joy my own.
Till a new note sounded, stillin'
All the rest. A thrush was trillin'!
Ah, the thrush I left behind me in the fields about Athlone!
Where, upon the whitethorn swayin',
He was minstrel of the Mayin',
In my days of love an' laughter that the years have laid at rest;
Here again his notes were ringin'!
But I'd lost the heart for singin'—
Ah, the song I could not answer was the one I knew the best.

MIA CARLOTTA

Giuseppe, da barber, ees greata for "mash,"
He gotta da bigga, da blacka mustache,
Good clo'es an' good styla an' playnta good cash.

W'enevra Giuseppe ees walk on da street,
Da people dey talka, "how nobby! how neat!
How softa da handa, how smalla da feet."

He raisa hees hat an' he shaka hees curls,
An' smila weeth teetha so shiny like pearls;
O! many da heart of da seely young girls
He gotta.
Yes, playnta he gotta—
But notta
Carlotta!

Giuseppe, da barber, he maka da eye,
An' lika da steam engine puffa an' sigh,
For catcha Carlotta w'en she ees go by.

Carlotta she walka weeth nose in da air,
An' look through Giuseppe weeth far-away stare,
As eef she no see dere ees som'body dere.

Giuseppe, da barber, he gotta da cash,
He gotta da clo'es an' da bigga mustache,
He gotta da seely young girls for da "mash,"
But notta—
You bat my life, notta—
Carlotta.
I gotta!

BETWEEN TWO LOVES

I gotta lov' for Angela,
I lov' Carlotta, too.
I no can marry both o' dem,
So w'at I gonna do?

O! Angela ees pretta girl,
She gotta hair so black, so curl,
An' teeth so white as anytheeng.
An' O! she gotta voice to seeng,
Dat mak' your hearta feel eet must
Jump up an' dance or eet weel bust.
An' alla time she seeng, her eyes
Dey smila like Italia's skies,
An' makin' flirtin' looks at you—
But dat ees all w'at she can do.

Carlotta ees no gotta song,
But she ees twice so big an' strong
As Angela, an' she no look
So beautiful—but she can cook.
You oughta see her carry wood!
I tal you w'at, eet do you good.

When she ees be som'body's wife
She worka hard, you bat my life!
She never gattin' tired, too—
But dat ees all w'at she can do.

O! my! I weesh dat Angela
  Was strong for carry wood,
Or else Carlotta gotta song
  An' looka pretta good.
I gotta lov' for Angela,
  I lov' Carlotta, too.
I no can marry both o' dem,
  So w'at I gonna do?

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1871, and was educated at Atlanta University and, later, at Columbia University. Even as an undergraduate he tried to support himself by writing; after graduation, he and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, became known for their successful contributions to vaudeville and the musical comedy stage. He served seven years as United States Consul in Venezuela and Nicaragua. In 1915 his English version of the libretto of *Goyescas,* the Spanish grand opera, was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

Johnson's *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1918) contains much that is merely meretricious and facile versifying. But, half buried in the midst of colorless clichés, there is not only the humor but the stern pathos which is characteristic of the Negro as singer. "The Creation," which followed, is as large in conception as it is appealing in naïveté. The quality of the stirring folk-tunes, such moving melodies as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Nobody Knows," breathe through the best of his lines. They capture some of that magic which he, with his brother, Rosamond Johnson, conjured up in the two collections of Negro Spirituals in 1925 and 1926.

In 1927, Johnson published his most important work, *God's Trombones.* Purporting to be seven Negro sermons in verse, Johnson communicated the sonorous mouth-filling periods, the fusion of tropical idioms with Bible English, the blaring, rambling but exalted stuff of "Noah Built the Ark" and "Go Down, Death."

Besides his creative work (Johnson is also the author of *The*

Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man), he has done many services for his race, not the least important of which is his preparation and editing of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922).

THE CREATION

(*A Negro Sermon*)

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely—
I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, *"That's good!"*

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,
And God rolled the light around in His hands,
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered up in a shining ball
And flung against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said, *"That's good!"*

Then God himself stepped down—
And the sun was on His right hand,
And the moon was on His left;
The stars were clustered about His head,

And the earth was under His feet.
And God walked, and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And He spat out the seven seas;
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine-tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms;
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And He said, "*Bring forth! Bring forth!*"
And quicker than God could drop His hand,
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings,
And God said, "*That's good!*"

Then God walked around
And God looked around
On all that He had made.
He looked at His sun,
And He looked at His moon,

And He looked at His little stars;
He looked on His world
With all its living things,
And God said, *"I'm lonely still."*

Then God sat down
On the side of a hill where He could think;
By a deep, wide river He sat down;
With His head in His hands,
God thought and thought,
Till He thought, *"I'll make me a man!"*

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled Him down;
And there the great God Almighty,
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand—
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped it in His own image;
Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in 1872 at Dayton, Ohio, the son of negro slaves. He was, before and after he began to write his interpretative verse, an elevator-boy. He tried newspaper work unsuccessfully and, in 1899, was given a position in the Library of Congress at Washington, D. C.

Although Dunbar wrote several volumes of short stories and two novels, he was most at home in his verse. Even here, his best work is not those "literary English" pieces by which he set such store, but the racy rhymes written in negro dialect, alternately tender and mocking. Dunbar's first collection, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*

(1896), contains many of his most characteristic poems. In an introduction, in which mention was made of the octoroon Dumas and the great Russian poet Pushkin, who was a mulatto, William Dean Howells wrote, "So far as I could remember, Paul Dunbar was the first man of pure African blood and of American civilization to feel the Negro life esthetically and express it lyrically. . . . His brilliant and unique achievement was to have studied the American Negro objectively, and to have represented him as he found him—with humor, with sympathy, and yet with what the reader must instinctively feel to be entire truthfulness." Allowance must be made for the overcordiality of Howells. In any case, Dunbar was the precursor of those Negro poets who, turning away from sentimentality, genuinely expressed the Negro.

Lyrics of the Hearthside (1899) and *Lyrics of Love and Laughter* (1903) are two other volumes full of folk-stuff. And though the final *Lyrics of Sunshine and Shadow* (1905) is less original, being crowded with echoes of all kinds of poetry from the songs of Robert Burns to the childhood rhymes of J. W. Riley, it contains a few of Dunbar's least known but keenest interpretations.

Since the original publications, various "gift-book editions" of his work have appeared, and his shorter poems have been set to music by dozens of composers.

Dunbar died in the city of his birth, Dayton, Ohio, February 10, 1916.

THE TURNING OF THE BABIES IN THE BED

Woman's sho' a cur'ous critter, an' dey ain't no doubtin' dat.
She's a mess o' funny capahs f'om huh slippahs to huh hat.
Ef yo' tries to un'erstan' huh, an' yo' fails, des' up an' say:
"D' ain't a bit o' use to try to un'erstan' a woman's way."

I don' mean to be complainin', but I's jes' a-settin' down
Some o' my own obserwations, w'en I cas' my eye eroun'.
Ef yo' ax me fu' to prove it, I ken do it mighty fine,
Fu' dey ain't no bettah 'zample den dis ve'y wife o' mine.

In de ve'y hea't o' midnight, w'en I's sleepin' good an' soun',
I kin hyeah a so't o' rustlin' an' somebody movin' 'roun'.
An' I say, "Lize, whut yo' doin'?" But she frown an' shek huh haid,
"Hesh yo' mouf, I's only tu'nin' of de chillun in de bed.

"Don' yo' know a chile gits restless, layin' all de night one way?
An' yo' got to kind o' 'range him sev'al times befo' de day?
So de little necks won't worry, an' de little backs won't break;
Don' yo' t'ink 'cause chillun's chillun dey haint got no pain an' ache."

So she shakes 'em, an' she twists 'em, an' she tu'ns 'em 'roun' erbout,
'Twell I don' see how de chillun evah keeps f'om hollahin' out.
Den she lif's 'em up head down'ards, so's dey won't git livah-grown,
But dey snoozes des' ez peaceful ez a liza'd on a stone.

W'en hit's mos' nigh time fu' wakin' on de dawn o' jedgement day,
Seems lak I kin hyeah ol' Gab'iel lay his trumpet down an' say,
"Who dat walkin' 'roun' so easy, down on earf ermong de dead?"—
'Twill be Lizy up a-tu'nin' of de chillun in de bed.

A COQUETTE CONQUERED

Yes, my ha't's ez ha'd ez stone—
Go 'way, Sam, an' lemme 'lone.
No; I ain't gwine change my min';
Ain't gwine ma'y you—nuffin' de kin'.

Phiny loves you true an' deah?
Go ma'y Phiny; whut I keer?
Oh, you needn't mou'n an' cry—
I don't keer how soon you die.

Got a present! What you got?
Somef'n fu' de pan er pot!
Huh! Yo' sass do sholy beat—
Think I don't git 'nough to eat?

Whut's dat un'neaf yo' coat?
Looks des lak a little shoat.
'Tain't no possum? Bless de Lamb!
Yes, it is, you rascal, Sam!

Gin it to me; whut you say?
Ain't you sma't! Oh, go 'way!
Possum do look mighty nice;
But you ax too big a price.

Tell me, is you talkin' true,
Dat's de gal's whut ma'ies you?
Come back, Sam; now whah's you gwine?
Co'se you knows dat possum's mine!

DISCOVERED

Seen you down at chu'ch las' night,
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
What I mean? Oh, dat's all right,
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
You was sma't ez sma't could be,
But you couldn't hide f'om me.
Ain't I got two eyes to see!
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Guess you thought you's awful keen;
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
Evahthing you done, I seen;
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
Seen him tek yo' ahm jes' so,
When he got outside de do'—
Oh, I know dat man's yo' beau!
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Say now, honey, wa'd he say?—
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
Keep yo' secrets—dat's yo' way—
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.
Won't tell me, an' I'm yo' pal!
I'm gwine tell his othah gal,—
Know huh, too; huh name is Sal.
  Nevah min', Miss Lucy.

Leonora Speyer was born in Washington, D. C., in 1872. Her mother was of New England stock, her father was Count Ferdinand von Stosch, a Prussian nobleman who fought for the Union in the Civil War, became an American citizen, lived and died here. As a girl, Leonora von Stosch was a professional violinist, playing with Nikisch, Seidl and other famous conductors. Later, she married Sir Edgar Speyer who, before the World War, did much to bring modern European music to England. Since 1915, Mrs. Speyer has lived in New York City.

Although her husband had always written playlets for the entertainment of the family and had published a German translation of Keats' poems, Leonora Speyer had never written until 1915. For five years after that date, her verse appeared in various magazines and attracted no little attention. Her first volume, *A Canopic Jar*, appeared in 1921. Much of it was tentative and fumbling, much of it oversweet. But there was something clear and definite in such sonnets as "The Ladder" and even some of the free verse had a distinctly personal turn. This pleasant impression was strengthened by Mrs. Speyer's subsequent work. The later poems (from which the group here reprinted has been selected) show a firmer hand, a surer use of material. Her second volume, *Fiddler's Farewell* (1926), was given the Pulitzer Award in 1927, and disclosed a still cleaner craftsmanship; her spirited "Ballad of Doc Higgins" won second place in *The Nation's* poetry prize contest in 1926. Such poems as "Swans," "Early," and "Fido" combine no small degree of fancy and fine-edged wit.

EARLY

This gray hour robs the hills of green,
But not of strength and not of height;
And not of sky the clouds between.

Into the dawn a cuckoo calls
(Sly bird among the dripping trees),
At vague, impassive intervals.

The swifts fly lower than the boughs,
With little, creaking, busy cries;
A sound of water ripples, flows,

Beyond the garden and the gate,
And down the road and through the town
(Small mountain stream in shallow spate)—

And day is here: its silver plan
Inexorable, is not disclosed,
Is not discussed with any man.

Only to those who lie awake
It yields blunt promises of rain,
Which it may break, which it may break!

FIDO

She made a pet of grief,
Trained it and taught it many a trick:
It begged and fetched and carried,
Hid, waiting to be found,
Or played at being dead
(Lying limp-heaped upon the ground);
Ran by her side,
Lay warm within her bed;
And on her heart immoderately was fed.

Grief was the lady's pride
(A jealous brute at best);
How it would growl and snap
At any joy that dared draw near,
Leaping upon her lap,
Teeth bared. . . . She'd frown
A little wistfully and say,
"Bad doggy, down!
My dear . . . my dear . . .
Sweet pest. . . ."
And hold the sly head closer to her breast.

NEW EXCAVATIONS

(*Pompeii*)

A workman with a spade in half a day
Can push two thousand lagging years away;
See, how the tragic villas, one by one,
Like drowsy lizards, creep into the sun.

SWANS

With wings held close and slim neck bent,
Along dark water scarcely stirred,
Floats, shimmering and indolent,
The alabaster bird.

Its mate floats near, the lovely one;
They lie like snow, cool flake on flake,
Mild breast on breast of dimmer swan
Dim-mirrored in the lake.

They glide . . . and glides that white embrace,
Shy bird to bird, with never a sound;
Thus leaned Narcissus toward his face,
Leaned lower till he drowned.

Leda leaned thus, subdued and spent
Beneath those vivid wings of love . . .
Along the lake, proud, indolent,
The vast birds scarcely move.

Silence is wisdom. Then how wise
Are these whose song is but their knell!
A god did well to choose this guise.
Truly a god did well.

PROTEST IN PASSING

This house of flesh was never loved of me,
Though I have known much love beneath its roof,
Always was I a guest who stood aloof,
Loth to accept such hospitality.
When the house slumbered, how I woke! for then
I knew of half-escapes along the night,
But now there comes a safer, swifter flight:
I go; nor need endure these rooms again.

I have been cowed too long by closed-in walls,
By masonry of muscle, blood and bone;
This quaking house of flesh that was my own,
High roof-tree of the heart, see how it falls!
I go . . . but pause upon the threshold's rust,
To shake from off my feet my own dead dust.

Guy Wetmore Carryl, son of Charles Edward Carryl (see page 89), was born in New York City, March 4, 1873. He was graduated from Columbia University in 1895, was editor of *Munsey's Magazine*, 1895-6, and, during the time he lived abroad (from 1897 to 1902), was the foreign representative of various American publications.

As a writer of prose he was received with no little acclaim; his stories, *The Transgression of Andrew Vane* (1902) and *Zut and Other Parisians* (1903), held the attention of a restless reading public. But it was as a writer of light verse that Carryl became preëminent. Inheriting a remarkable technical gift from his father, young Carryl soon surpassed him as well as other rivals in the field of brilliantly rhymed, adroitly turned burlesques.

Although he wrote several serious poems which were collected in the posthumously published *The Garden of Years*, 1904, Carryl's most characteristic work is to be found in his perversions of the parables of Aesop, *Fables for the Frivolous* (1898); the topsy-turvy interpretations of nursery rhymes, *Mother Goose for Grownups* (1900); and the fantastic variations on fairy tales in *Grimm Tales Made Gay* (1903)—all of them with a surprising (and punning) Moral attached. Even those who scorn the gymnastics of most light verse usually succumb to the ease with which Carryl overcomes seemingly impossible hazards in the rhyme-leaping fable of the fox and the raven or the appalling pun-juggling in the new version of Puss-in-Boots. He lacked only a Sullivan—and a sense of satire—to be called the Gilbert of America.

This extraordinary versifier died, before reaching the height of his power, at the age of thirty-one, in the summer of 1904.

HOW JACK FOUND THAT BEANS MAY GO BACK ON A CHAP

Without the slightest basis
For hypochondriasis
  A widow had forebodings which a cloud around her flung,
And with expression cynical
For half the day a clinical
  Thermometer she held beneath her tongue.

Whene'er she read the papers
She suffered from the vapors,
  At every tale of malady or accident she'd groan;

In every new and smart disease,
From housemaid's knee to heart disease,
  She recognized the symptoms as her own!

She had a yearning chronic
To try each novel tonic,
  Elixir, panacea, lotion, opiate, and balm;
And from a homeopathist
Would change to an hydropathist,
  And back again, with stupefying calm!

She was nervous, cataleptic,
And anemic, and dyspeptic:
  Though not convinced of apoplexy, yet she had her fears.
She dwelt with force fanatical
Upon a twinge rheumatical,
  And said she had a buzzing in her ears!

Now all of this bemoaning
And this grumbling and this groaning
  The mind of Jack, her son and heir, unconscionably bored.
His heart completely hardening,
He gave his time to gardening,
  For raising beans was something he adored.

Each hour in accents morbid
This limp maternal bore bid
  Her callous son affectionate and lachrymose good-bys.
She never granted Jack a day
Without some long "Alackaday!"
  Accompanied by rolling of the eyes.

But Jack, no panic showing,
Just watched his beanstalk growing,
  And twined with tender fingers the tendrils up the pole.
At all her words funereal
He smiled a smile ethereal,
  Or sighed an absent-minded "Bless my soul!"

That hollow-hearted creature
Would never change a feature:
  No tear bedimmed his eye, however touching was her talk.

She never fussed or flurried him,
The only thing that worried him
Was when no bean-pods grew upon the stalk!

But then he wabbled loosely
His head, and wept profusely,
And, taking out his handkerchief to mop away his tears,
Exclaimed: "It hasn't got any!"
He found this blow to botany
Was sadder than were all his mother's fears.

The Moral is that gardeners pine
Whene'er no pods adorn the vine.
Of all sad words experience gleans
The saddest are: "It *might* have beans."
(I did not make this up myself:
'Twas in a book upon my shelf.
It's witty, but I don't deny
It's rather Whittier than I!)

THE SYCOPHANTIC FOX AND THE GULLIBLE RAVEN

A raven sat upon a tree,
And not a word he spoke, for
His beak contained a piece of Brie,
Or, maybe, it was Roquefort.
We'll make it any kind you please—
At all events it was a cheese.

Beneath the tree's umbrageous limb
A hungry fox sat smiling;
He saw the raven watching him,
And spoke in words beguiling:
"*J'admire,*" said he, "*ton beau plumage,*"
(The which was simply persiflage).

Two things there are, no doubt you know,
To which a fox is used:
A rooster that is bound to crow,
A crow that's bound to roost;
And whichsoever he espies
He tells the most unblushing lies.

"Sweet foul," he said, "I understand
You're more than merely natty,
I hear you sing to beat the band
And Adelina Patti.
Pray render with your liquid tongue
A bit from 'Götterdämmerung.' "

This subtle speech was aimed to please
The crow, and it succeeded;
He thought no bird in all the trees
Could sing as well as he did.
In flattery completely doused,
He gave the "Jewel Song" from "Faust."

But gravitation's law, of course,
As Isaac Newton showed it,
Exerted on the cheese its force,
And elsewhere soon bestowed it.
In fact, there is no need to tell
What happened when to earth it fell.

I blush to add that when the bird
Took in the situation
He said one brief, emphatic word,
Unfit for publication.
The fox was greatly startled, but
He only sighed and answered "Tut."

The Moral is: A fox is bound
To be a shameless sinner.
And also: When the cheese comes round
You know it's after dinner.
But (what is only known to few)
The fox is after dinner, too.

HOW A CAT WAS ANNOYED AND A POET WAS BOOTED

A poet had a cat.
There is nothing odd in that—
(I *might* make a little pun about the *Mews!*)

But what is really more
Remarkable, she wore
A pair of pointed patent-leather shoes.
And I doubt me greatly whether
You have heard the like of that:
Pointed shoes of patent-leather
On a cat!

His time he used to pass
Writing sonnets, on the grass—
(I *might* say something good on *pen* and *sward!*)
While the cat sat near at hand,
Trying hard to understand
The poems he occasionally roared.
(I myself possess a feline,
But when poetry I roar
He is sure to make a bee-line
For the door.)

The poet, cent by cent,
All his patrimony spent—
(I *might* tell how he went from *verse* to *worse!*)
Till the cat was sure she could,
By advising, do him good.
So addressed him in a manner that was terse:
"We are bound toward the scuppers,
And the time has come to act,
Or we'll both be on our uppers
For a fact!"

On her boot she fixed her eye,
But the boot made no reply—
(I *might* say: "Couldn't speak to save its *sole!*")
And the foolish bard, instead
Of responding, only read
A verse that wasn't bad upon the whole.
And it pleased the cat so greatly,
Though she knew not what it meant,
That I'll quote approximately
How it went:—

"If I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree"—
  (I *might* put in: "I think I'd just as *leaf!*")
"Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough"—
  Well, he'd plagiarized it bodily, in brief!
    But that cat of simple breeding
      Couldn't read the lines between,
    So she took it to a leading
        Magazine.

She was jarred and very sore
When they showed her to the door.
  (I *might* hit off the *door* that was a *jar!*)
To the spot she swift returned
Where the poet sighed and yearned,
  And she told him that he'd gone a little far.
    "Your performance with this rhyme has
      Made me absolutely sick,"
    She remarked. "I think the time has
        Come to kick!"

I could fill up half the page
With descriptions of her rage—
  (I *might* say that she went a bit *too fur!*)
When he smiled and murmured: "Shoo!"
"There is one thing I can do!"
  She answered with a wrathful kind of purr.
    "You may shoe me, an it suit you,
      But I feel my conscience bid
    Me, as tit for tat, to boot you!"
        (Which she did.)

The Moral of the plot
(Though I say it, as should not!)
  Is: An editor is difficult to suit.
But again there're other times
When the man who fashions rhymes
  Is a rascal, and a bully one to boot!

(Joseph) Trumbull Stickney was born June 20, 1874, at Geneva, Switzerland, of New England parents. In 1891 he entered Harvard and was graduated with high classical honors in 1895. Immediately thereafter, he went abroad, studying at the Sorbonne and College de France for seven years. The University of Paris gave him the Doctorat es Lettres, never before conferred on an American, for two scholarly theses in 1903, the critic Masqueray pronouncing his "*Les Sentences dans la Poesie Grecque*" one of the best modern studies of Hellenic literature. A few months later he returned to America, where he became instructor of Greek at Harvard University. Here his work was suddenly interrupted by death, caused by a tumor on the brain, and his verses were given to his friends with these words, "Here are my manuscripts. Do as you please with them." Stickney died at the age of thirty, October 11, 1904.

One year after his death, his friends, George Cabot Lodge, John Ellerton Lodge and William Vaughn Moody, edited his posthumous *Poems* (1905), a small and wholly forgotten volume, *Dramatic Verses*, having appeared in 1902. Stickney seems to have found no wider circle of readers than his restricted intimate one. The collections of the period have no record of him; Stedman's voluminous anthology does not even mention his name. Yet there can be no question but that Stickney was a representative poet of his generation, worthy to stand beside Moody, whose point of view as well as his rhetoric he shared. There is a note, however, in Stickney's poetry wholly unlike Moody's, a preoccupation with death that relates him—in spirit at least—to the later Jeffers. He spoke of divinely learning to suffer loneliness; his, he wrote, were the "wise denials." One of his lyrics significantly ends

> O let us yield to life's divinest charm
> That lured us thro' the blasted field of hope,
> Let us return to death.

Although his sonnets suffer from patches of a purple cast, they have vigor and imaginative individuality. Stickney was a poet whom, whatever his verbal defects, American literature could ill afford to lose so early.

"LIVE BLINDLY AND UPON THE HOUR"

Live blindly and upon the hour. The Lord,
Who was the Future, died full long ago.
Knowledge which is the Past is folly. Go,
Poor child, and be not to thyself abhorred.

Around thine earth sun-wingèd winds do blow
And planets roll; a meteor draws his sword;
The rainbow breaks his seven-colored chord
And the long strips of river-silver flow:
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.
Drinking their lips, catch thou the dream in flight
About their fragile hairs' aërial gold.
Thou art divine, thou livest,—as of old
Apollo springing naked to the light,
And all his island shivered into flowers.

IN THE PAST

There lies a somnolent lake
Under a noiseless sky,
Where never the mornings break
Nor the evenings die.

Mad flakes of color
Whirl on its even face
Iridescent and streaked with pallor;
And, warding the silent place,

The rocks rise sheer and gray
From the sedgeless brink to the sky
Dull-lit with the light of pale half-day
Thro' a void space and dry.

And the hours lag dead in the air
With a sense of coming eternity
To the heart of the lonely boatman there:
That boatman am I,

I, in my lonely boat,
A waif on the somnolent lake,
Watching the colors creep and float
With the sinuous track of a snake.

Now I lean o'er the side
And lazy shades in the water see,
Lapped in the sweep of a sluggish tide
Crawled in from the living sea;

And next I fix mine eyes,
So long that the heart declines,
On the changeless face of the open skies
Where no star shines;

And now to the rocks I turn,
To the rocks, around
That lie like walls of a circling urn
Wherein lie bound

The waters that feel my powerless strength
And meet my homeless oar
Laboring over their ashen length
Never to find a shore.

But the gleam still skims
At times on the somnolent lake,
And a light there is that swims
With the whirl of a snake;

And tho' dead be the hours in the air,
And dayless the sky,
The heart is alive of the boatman there:
That boatman am I.

AGE IN YOUTH

From far she's come, and very old,
And very soiled with wandering.
The dust of seasons she has brought
Unbidden to this field of Spring.

She's halted at the log-barred gate.
The May-day waits, a tangled spill
Of light that weaves and moves along
The daisied margin of the hill,

Where Nature bares her bridal heart,
And on her snowy soul the sun
Languors desirously and dull,
An amorous pale vermilion.

She's halted, propped her rigid arms,
With dead big eyes she drinks the west;
The brown rags hang like clotted dust
About her, save her withered breast.

A very soilure of a dream
Runs in the furrows of her brow,
And with a crazy voice she croons
An ugly catch of long ago.

But look! Along the molten sky
There runs strange havoc of the sun.
"What a strange sight this is," she says,
"I'll cross the field, I'll follow on."

The bars are falling from the gate.
The meshes of the meadow yield;
And trudging sunsetward she draws
A journey thro' the daisy field.

The daisies shudder at her hem.
Her dry face laughs with flowery light;
An aureole lifts her soiled gray hair:
"I'll on," she says, "to see this sight."

In the rude math her torn shoe mows
Juices of trod grass and crushed stalk
Mix with a soiled and earthy dew,
With smear of petals gray as chalk.

The Spring grows sour along her track;
The winy airs of amethyst
Turn acid. "Just beyond the ledge,"
She says, "I'll see the sun at rest."

And to the tremor of her croon,
Her old, old catch of long ago,
The newest daisies of the grass
She shreds and passes on below. . . .

The sun is gone where nothing is
And the black-bladed shadows war.
She came and passed, she passed along
That wet, black curve of scimitar.

In vain the flower-lifting morn
With golden fingers to uprear;
The weak Spring here shall pause awhile:
This is a scar upon the year.

"ALONE ON LYKAION"

Alone on Lykaion since man hath been
Stand on the height two columns, where at rest
Two eagles hewn of gold sit looking East
Forever; and the sun goes up between.
Far down around the mountain's oval green
An order keeps the falling stones abreast.
Below within the chaos last and least
A river like a curl of light is seen.
Beyond the river lies the even sea,
Beyond the sea another ghost of sky,—
O God, support the sickness of my eye
Lest the far space and long antiquity
Suck out my heart, and on this awful ground
The great wind kill my little shell with sound.

H. H. KNIBBS

Harry Herbert Knibbs was born at Niagara Falls, October 24, 1874. After a desultory schooling, he attended Harvard for three years when he was thirty-four. He wrote his first book, *Lost Farm Camp*, a novel, as a class exercise.

Half a dozen volumes followed, *Overland Red* (1914) and *Tang of Life* (1917) being the most popular. In 1911 Knibbs settled in Los Angeles, California, where he has lived ever since. *Temescal*, in many ways his best tale, appeared in 1925.

In *Riders of the Stars* (1916) and *Songs of the Trail* (1920) Knibbs carries on the tradition of Bret Harte and the Pike County Ballads. High-hearted verse this is, with more than an occasional flash of poetry. To the typical Western breeziness, Knibbs adds whimsicality, a rough-shod but nimble imagination. Knibbs, far more accurately than Service, sings the rough-edged, horny-handed ballad of the pioneer; he is the singer of the ranch, the temporary camp, the uncertain trail.

THE VALLEY THAT GOD FORGOT

Out in the desert spaces, edged by a hazy blue,
Davison sought the faces of the long-lost friends he knew:
They were there, in the distance dreaming
Their dreams that were worn and old;
They were there, to his frenzied seeming,
Still burrowing down for gold.

Davison's face was leather; his mouth was a swollen blot,
His mind was a floating feather, in The Valley That God Forgot;
Wild as a dog gone loco,
Or sullen or meek, by turns,
He mumbled a "Poco! Poco!"
And whispered of pools and ferns.

Gold! Why his, for the finding! But water was never found
Save in deep caverns winding miles through the underground:
Cool, far, shadowy places
Edged by the mirrored trees,
When—Davison saw the faces!
And fear let loose his knees.

There was Shorty who owed him money, and Billing who bossed the crowd;
And Steve whom the boys called "Sunny," and Collins who talked so loud:
Miguel with the handsome daughter,
And the rustler, Ed McCray;
Five—and they begged for water,
And offered him gold, in pay.

Gold? It was never cheaper. And Davison shook his head:
"The price of a drink is steeper out here than in town," he said.

He laughed as they mouthed and muttered
Through lips that were cracked and dried;
The pulse in his ear-drum fluttered:
"I'm through with the game!" he cried.

"I'm through!" And he knelt and fumbled the cap of his dry canteen;
Then, rising, he swayed and stumbled into a black ravine:
His ghostly comrades followed,
For Davison's end was near,
And a shallow grave they hollowed,
When up from it, cool and clear

Bubbled the water—hidden a pick-stroke beneath the sand;
Davison, phantom-ridden, scooped with a shaking hand . . .
Davison swears they made it,
The Well where we drank today.
Davison's game? He played it
And won—so the town-folk say:

Called it The Morning-Glory—near tnose abandoned stamps,
And Davison's crazy story was told in a hundred camps:
Time and the times have tamed it,
His yarn—and this desert spot,
But I'm strong for the man who named it,
The Valley That God Forgot.

ROLL A ROCK DOWN

Oh, out in the West where the riders are ready,
They sing an old song and they tell an old tale,
And its moral is plain: Take it easy, go steady,
While riding a horse on the Malibu Trail.

It's a high, rocky trail with its switch-backs and doubles,
It has no beginning and never an end:
It's risky and rough and it's plumb full of troubles,
From Shifty—that's shale—up to Powder Cut Bend.

Old-timers will tell you the rangers who made it,
  Sang "Roll A Rock Down," with a stiff upper lip,
And cussed all creation, but managed to grade it;
  With a thousand-foot drop if a pony should slip.

Oh, the day it was wet and the sky it was cloudy,
  The trail was as slick as an oil-rigger's pants,
When Ranger McCabe on his pony, Old Rowdy,
  Came ridin' where walkin' was takin' a chance.

"Oh, Roll A Rock Down!" picks and shovels was clangin',
  And Rowdy a-steppin' that careful and light,
When the edge it gave way and McCabe was left hangin'
  Clean over the rim—with no bottom in sight.

I shook out a loop—bein' crowded for throwin';
  I flipped a fair noose for a rope that was wet:
It caught just as Mac lost his holt and was goin',
  And burned through my fingers: it's burnin' them yet.

For Ranger McCabe never knuckled to danger;
  My pardner in camp, on the trail, or in town:
And he slid into glory, a true forest-ranger,
  With: "Hell! I'm a-goin'! Just roll a rock down."

So, roll a rock down where a ranger is sleepin'
  Aside of his horse below Powder Cut Bend:
I ride and I look where the shadows are creepin',
  And roll a rock down—for McCabe was my friend.

I've sung you my song and I've told you my story,
  And all that I ask when I'm done with the show,
Is, roll a rock down when I slide into glory,
  And say that I went like a ranger should go.

ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH

Anna Hempstead Branch was born at New London, Connecticut. She was graduated from Smith College in 1897 and has devoted herself to literature and social service ever since.

Her two chief volumes, *The Shoes That Danced* (1905) and

Rose of the Wind (1910), reveal the lyrist, but they show a singer who is less fanciful than philosophic. Often, indeed, Miss Branch weighs down her simple melodies with intellectuality; more often, she attains a high level of lyricism. Her lines are admirably condensed; rich in personal as well as poetic value, they maintain a high and austere level. A typical poem is "The Monk in the Kitchen," which, with its spiritual loveliness and verbal felicity, is a celebration of cleanness that gives order an almost mystical nobility and recalls George Herbert.

Although nothing she has ever written has attained the popularity of her shorter works, "Nimrod" has an epic sweep, a large movement which, within the greater curve, contains many moments of exalted imagery. The deeply religious feeling implicit in this work governs the author as person no less than as poet, Miss Branch having given a great part of her life to settlement work on the East Side of New York. "To a Dog" is more direct than is Miss Branch's wont; "The Monk in the Kitchen" is no less straightforward, though its metaphysics make it seem less forthright.

THE MONK IN THE KITCHEN

I

Order is a lovely thing;
On disarray it lays its wing,
Teaching simplicity to sing.
It has a meek and lowly grace,
Quiet as a nun's face.
Lo—I will have thee in this place!
Tranquil well of deep delight,
All things that shine through thee appear
As stones through water, sweetly clear.
Thou clarity,
That with angelic charity
Revealest beauty where thou art,
Spread thyself like a clean pool.
Then all the things that in thee are,
Shall seem more spiritual and fair,
Reflection from serener air—
Sunken shapes of many a star
In the high heavens set afar.

II

Ye stolid, homely, visible things,
Above you all brood glorious wings
Of your deep entities, set high,
Like slow moons in a hidden sky.
But you, their likenesses, are spent
Upon another element.
Truly ye are but seemings—
The shadowy cast-off gleamings
Of bright solidities. Ye seem
Soft as water, vague as dream;
Image, cast in a shifting stream.

III

What are ye?
I know not.
Brazen pan and iron pot,
Yellow brick and gray flagstone
That my feet have trod upon—
Ye seem to me
Vessels of bright mystery
For ye do bear a shape, and so
Though ye were made by man, I know
An inner Spirit also made,
And ye his breathings have obeyed.

IV

Shape, the strong and awful Spirit,
Laid his ancient hand on you.
He waste chaos doth inherit;
He can alter and subdue.
Verily, he doth lift up
Matter, like a sacred cup.
Into deep substance he reached, and lo!
Where ye were not, ye were; and so
Out of useless nothing, ye
Groaned and laughed and came to be,
And I use you, as I can,
Wonderful uses, made for man,
Iron pot and brazen pan.

V

What are ye?
I know not;
Nor what I really do
When I move and govern you.
There is no small work unto God.
He required of us greatness;
Of his least creature
A high angelic nature,
Stature superb and bright completeness.
He sets to us no humble duty.
Each act that he would have us do
Is haloed round with strangest beauty;
Terrific deeds and cosmic tasks
Of his plainest child he asks.
When I polish the brazen pan
I hear a creature laugh afar
In the gardens of a star,
And from his burning presence run
Flaming wheels of many a sun.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
When I cleanse this earthen floor
My spirit leaps to see
Bright garments trailing over it,
A cleanness made by me.
Purger of all men's thoughts and ways,
With labor do I sound Thy praise,
My work is done for Thee.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
Therefore let me spread abroad
The beautiful cleanness of my God.

VI

One time in the cool of dawn
Angels came and worked with me.
The air was soft with many a wing.
They laughed amid my solitude
And cast bright looks on everything.

Sweetly of me did they ask
That they might do my common task.
And all were beautiful—but one
With garments whiter than the sun
Had such a face
Of deep, remembered grace;
That when I saw I cried—"Thou art
The great Blood-Brother of my heart.
Where have I seen thee?"—And he said,
"When we are dancing round God's throne,
How often thou art there.
Beauties from thy hands have flown
Like white doves wheeling in mid-air.
Nay—thy soul remembers not?
Work on, and cleanse thy iron pot."

VII

What are we? I know not.

WHILE LOVELINESS GOES BY

Sometimes when all the world seems gray and dun
And nothing beautiful, a voice will cry,
"Look out, look out! Angels are drawing nigh!"
Then my slow burdens leave me one by one,
And swiftly does my heart arise and run
Even like a child while loveliness goes by—
And common folk seem children of the sky,
And common things seem shapèd of the sun,
Oh, pitiful! that I who love them, must
So soon perceive their shining garments fade!
And slowly, slowly, from my eyes of trust
Their flaming banners sink into a shade!
While this earth's sunshine seems the golden dust
Slow settling from that radiant cavalcade.

TO A DOG

I

If there is no God for thee
Then there is no God for me

If He sees not when you share
With the poor your frugal fare,

Does not see you at a grave,
Every instinct bred to save;

As if you were the only one
Believing in a resurrection;

When you wait, as lovers do,
Watching till your friend comes true;

Does not reverence when you take
Angry words for love's sweet sake;

If his eye does not approve
All your faith and pain and love;

If the heart of justice fail
And is for you of no avail;

If there is no heaven for thee
Then there is no heaven for me.

II

If the Lord they tell us of
Died for men yet loves not love,

If from out His Paradise
He shuts the innocent and wise,

The gay, obedient, simple, good,
The docile ones, of friendly mood,

Those who die to save a friend
Heavenly faithful to the end;

If there is no cross for thee
Then there is no cross for me.

III

If its boughs reach not so high
That they bowed star and sky,

If its roots are not so sound
That they cleave the heavy ground,

If it thrills not through all Nature
Plunged through every living creature,

If its leaves do not enmesh
Every bit of groaning flesh,

If it strike no mighty spur
Through fang and claw and tooth and fur

Piercing tree and earth and stone,
Then indeed I stand alone.

Nothing less than this can save
Me, from out my fleshly grave,

Me, in whom such jungles are
Where the beasts go out to war.

If there is no God for thee
Then there is no God for me.

AMY LOWELL

Amy Lowell was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, February 9, 1874, of a long line of noted publicists and poets, the first colonist (a Percival Lowell) arriving in Newburyport in 1637. James Russell Lowell was a cousin of her grandfather; Abbott Lawrence, her mother's father, was minister to England; Percival Lowell, the astronomer who charted the conjectural canals on Mars, was a brother; and Abbott Lawrence Lowell, her other brother, was president of Harvard University.

Miss Lowell obtained her early education through private tuition and travel abroad. These European journeys were the background upon which much of Miss Lowell's later work was unconsciously woven; her visits to France, Egypt, Turkey and Greece bore fruit, many years later, in the exotic colors of her verse. As a young girl, she had vague aspirations toward being a writer; but it was not until 1902, when she was twenty-eight years old, that she definitely determined to be a poet. For eight years she served a rigorous and solitary apprenticeship, reading the classics of all schools, studying the technique of verse, exercising her verbal gifts—but never attempting to publish a single line. In 1910 her first verse was printed in *The Atlantic Monthly;* two years later her first book appeared.

This volume, *A Dome of Many-colored Glass* (1912), was a strangely unpromising first book. Subject and treatment were conventional; the influence of Keats and Tennyson was evident; the tone was soft and sentimental, without a trace of personality. It was a queer prologue to the vivid *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914), which marked not only an extraordinary advance but a totally new individuality. This second volume contained many distinctive poems written in the usual forms, a score of pictorial pieces illustrating Miss Lowell's identification with the Imagists (see Preface) and, possibly most important from a technical standpoint, the first appearance in English of "polyphonic prose." Of this extremely flexible form, Miss Lowell, in an essay on John Gould Fletcher, wrote, " 'Polyphonic' means 'many-voiced,' and the form is so-called because it makes use of the 'voices' of poetry, namely: meter, *vers libre*, assonance, alliteration, rhyme and return. It employs every form of rhythm, even prose rhythm at times."

It was because of such experiments in form and technique that Miss Lowell first attracted attention and is still best known. But, beneath a preoccupation with theories and novelty of utterance, there was the skilled story-teller, who revivified history with creative excitement. *Men, Women and Ghosts* (1916) brims with this contagious vitality; it is richer in variety than its predecessors, swifter in movement. It is, in common with all of Miss Lowell's work, best in its portrayal of colors and sounds, of physical perceptions rather than the reactions of inner experience. She is, preëminently, the poet of the external world; her visual effects are as "hard and clear" as the most uncompromising Imagist could desire. The colors with which her works are studded seem like bits of bright enamel; every leaf and flower has a lacquered brilliance. To compensate for the lack of the spirit's warmth, Miss Lowell feverishly agitates all she touches; nothing remains quiescent. Whether she writes about a fruit shop, or a flower-garden in Roxbury, or a windowful of red slippers, or a string quartet, or a Japanese print—everything flashes, leaps, startles, spins and burns with dynamic, almost savage, speed. Motion too often takes the place of emotion.

In *Can Grande's Castle* (1918) Miss Lowell achieves a broader line; the teller of stories, the bizarre decorator and the experimenter finally fuse. The poems in this volume are only four in number—four polyphonic prose-poems of unusual length, extraordinarily varied in their sense of amplitude and time. *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) which followed is, in many ways, Miss Lowell's most personal revelation. Although there are pages devoted to the merely dazzling and grotesque, most of the poems are in a quieter key.

Legends (1921) is closely related to *Can Grande's Castle.* Here are eleven stories placed against seven different backgrounds. The first must be rated among Miss Lowell's most dazzling achievements: a *tour de force* with colors as strange and metallic as the scene it pictures. The next years were devoted to her Keats researches, the two volumes containing them being published just before her death.

Besides Miss Lowell's original poetry, she undertook many studies in foreign literatures; she made the English versions of the poems translated from the Chinese by Florence Ayscough in the vivid *Fir-Flower Tablets* (1921). She also wrote two volumes of critical essays: *Six French Poets* (1915) and *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (1917), valuable aids to the student of contemporary literature. Two years after its publication she acknowledged the authorship of the anonymous *A Critical Fable* (1922), a modern sequel to James Russell Lowell's *A Fable for Critics.* Her monumental *John Keats*, an exhaustive biography and analysis of the poet in two volumes, appeared early in 1925.

For years Miss Lowell had been suffering from ill health; she had been operated upon several times, but her general condition as well as her continual desire to work, nullified the effects of the operations. In April, 1925, her condition became worse; she was forced to cancel a projected lecture trip through England and to cease all work. She died as the result of an unexpected paralytic stroke on May 12, 1925. Her death occasioned nation-wide tributes; the very journals which had ridiculed her during her life were loudest in praise. A few editorials maintained that her personality was more forceful and impressive than her work; the majority, however, agreed that hers was one of the most daring and picturesque figures in contemporary literature. Like all pioneers, she was the target of scorn and hostility; but, unlike most innovators, she lived to see her experiments rise from the limbo of ridicule to a definite place in their period.

Three posthumous volumes appeared at yearly intervals immediately after her death: *What's O'Clock* (1925) which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for that year, *East Wind* (1926), *Ballads for Sale* (1927). The first was arranged by the poet herself and includes such less experimental poems as "Meeting-House Hill" and "Lilacs" which are tart and native; the second is a set of dialect and somewhat overdramatized New England narratives; the third is a miscellaneous collection. Her qualities are epitomized in these three books and the fact that they show no particular advance upon the earlier "Patterns" is significant. Her brilliance, her command of the lacquered phrase and the glazed figure, her pyrotechnique which cause words to bloom and burst at the same moment as though issuing from firework flower-pots, her restless excitement provoking inanimate objects to a furious life of their own—these were characteristics recognizable from the first. In some of the new poems, the juxtaposition of the thing observed and the thing imagined ("Meeting-House Hill" is a particularly vivid example) is more than ordinarily surprising, but one is prepared for the verve and alacrity of upspringing colors, for the purposeful shifting and distortion of surfaces like the clash of planes in an agitated canvas.

It is here that Amy Lowell triumphed: in the visual world, in the reflection of reflections, in capturing the minute disturbances of light and movement. It has been said that, though a poet, she failed as a humanist, that she never touched the emotions because she never knew where to look for them. But this—contradicted by such poems as "Madonna of the Evening Flowers" and the ecstatic "In Excelsis"—is only true in the sense that emotion was not this poet's domain nor, except in a few instances, her concern. Fineness and *finesse* were her preoccupations, and her many volumes testify to a continually adroit craftsmanship.

A LADY

You are beautiful and faded,
Like an old opera tune
Played upon a harpsichord;
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.

In your eyes
Smolder the fallen roses of outlived minutes,
And the perfume of your soul
Is vague and suffusing,
With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
Your half-tones delight me,
And I grow mad with gazing
At your blent colors.

My vigor is a new-minted penny,
Which I cast at your feet.
Gather it up from the dust
That its sparkle may amuse you.

SOLITAIRE

When night drifts along the streets of the city,
And sifts down between the uneven roofs,
My mind begins to peek and peer.
It plays at ball in odd, blue Chinese gardens,
And shakes wrought dice-cups in Pagan temples
Amid the broken flutings of white pillars.
It dances with purple and yellow crocuses in its hair,
And its feet shine as they flutter over drenched grasses.
How light and laughing my mind is,
When all good folk have put out their bedroom candles,
And the city is still.

PATTERNS

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jeweled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train

Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime-tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden-paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover.

Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.
"Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday se'nnight."
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown;
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim

That sunlight carried blessing.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

WIND AND SILVER

Greatly shining,
The Autumn moon floats in the thin sky;
And the fish-ponds shake their backs and flash their dragon scales
As she passes over them.

NIGHT CLOUDS

The white mares of the moon rush along the sky
Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass Heavens;
The white mares of the moon are all standing on their hind legs
Pawing at the green porcelain doors of the remote Heavens.
Fly, mares!
Strain your utmost,
Scatter the milky dust of stars,
Or the tiger sun will leap upon you and destroy you
With one lick of his vermilion tongue.

FREE FANTASIA ON JAPANESE THEMES

All the afternoon there has been a chirping of birds,
And the sun lies warm and still on the western sides of swollen branches,
There is no wind;
Even the little twigs at the ends of the branches do not move,
And the needles of the pines are solid
Bands of inarticulated blackness
Against the blue-white sky,
Still, but alert;
And my heart is still and alert,
Passive with sunshine,
Avid of adventure.

I would experience new emotions,
Submit to strange enchantments,
Bend to influences
Bizarre, exotic,
Fresh with burgeoning.
I would climb a sacred mountain
Struggle with other pilgrims up a steep path through pine-trees,
Above to the smooth, treeless slopes,
And prostrate myself before a painted shrine,
Beating my hands upon the hot earth,
Quieting my eyes upon the distant sparkle
Of the faint spring sea.

I would recline upon a balcony
In purple curving folds of silk,
And my dress should be silvered with a pattern
Of butterflies and swallows,
And the black band of my *obi*
Should flash with gold circular threads,
And glitter when I moved.
I would lean against the railing
While you sang to me of wars
Past and to come—
Sang, and played the samisen.
Perhaps I would beat a little hand drum

In time to your singing;
Perhaps I would only watch the play of light
Upon the hilt of your two swords.

I would sit in a covered boat,
Rocking slowly to the narrow waves of a river,
While above us, an arc of moving lanterns,
Curved a bridge,
A hiss of gold
Blooming out of darkness,
Rockets exploded,
And died in a soft dripping of colored stars.
We would float between the high trestles,
And drift away from other boats,
Until the rockets flared soundless,
And their falling stars hung silent in the sky,
Like wistaria clusters above the ancient entrance of a temple.

I would anything
Rather than this cold paper;
With outside, the quiet sun on the sides of burgeoning branches,
And inside, only my books.

A DECADE

When you came, you were like red wine and honey,
And the taste of you burnt my mouth with its sweetness.
Now you are like morning bread,
Smooth and pleasant.
I hardly taste you at all, for I know your savor;
But I am completely nourished.

MADONNA OF THE EVENING FLOWERS

All day long I have been working,
Now I am tired.
I call: "Where are you?"
But there is only the oak tree rustling in the wind.
The house is very quiet,
The sun shines in on your books,
On your scissors and thimble just put down,
But you are not there.

Suddenly I am lonely:
Where are you?
I go about searching.

Then I see you,
Standing under a spire of pale blue larkspur,
With a basket of roses on your arm.
You are cool, like silver,
And you smile.

I think the Canterbury bells are playing little tunes,
You tell me that the peonies need spraying,
That the columbines have overrun all bounds,
That the pyrus japonica should be cut back and rounded.
You tell me these things.
But I look at you, heart of silver,
White heart-flame of polished silver,
Burning beneath the blue steeples of the larkspur,
And I long to kneel instantly at your feet,
While all about us peal the loud, sweet *Te Deums* of the Canterbury bells.

EVELYN RAY

No decent man will cross a field
Laid down to hay, until its yield

Is cut and cocked, yet there was the track
Going in from the lane and none coming back.

But that was afterwards; before,
The field was smooth as a sea off shore

On a shimmering afternoon, waist-high
With bent, and red top, and timothy.

Lush with oat grass and tall fescue,
And the purple green of Kentucky blue;

A noble meadow, so broad each way
It took three good scythes to mow in a day.

Just where the field broke into a wood
A knotted old catalpa stood,

And in the old catalpa-tree
A cat-bird sang immoderately.

The sky above him was round and big
And its center seemed just over his twig.

The earth below him was fresh and fair,
With the sun's long fingers everywhere.

The cat-bird perched where a great leaf hung,
And the great leaf tilted, and flickered, and swung.

The cat-bird sang with a piercing glee
Up in the sun-specked catalpa-tree.

He sang so loud and he sang so long
That his ears were drowned in his own sweet song.

But the little peering leaves of grass
Shook and sundered to let them pass,

To let them pass, the men who heard
Nothing the grass said, nothing the bird.

Each man was still as a shining stone,
Each man's head was a buzzing bone

Wherein two words screeched in and out
Like a grinding saw with its turn about:

"Evelyn Ray," each stone man said,
And the words cut back and forth through his head,
And each of them wondered if he were dead.

The cat-bird sang with his head cocked up
Gazing into the sky's blue cup.

The grasses waved back into place,
The sun's long fingers stroked each face,

Each grim, cold face that saw no sun.
And the feet led the faces on and on.

They stopped beside the catalpa-tree,
Said one stone face to the other: "See!"

The other face had nothing to say,
Its lips were frozen on "Evelyn Ray."

They laid their hats in the tall green grass
Where the crickets and grasshoppers pass and pass.

They hung their coats in the crotch of a pine
And paced five feet in an even line.

They measured five paces either way,
And the saws in their heads screeched "Evelyn Ray."

The cat-bird sang so loud and clear
He heard nothing at all, there was nothing to hear.

Even the swish of long legs pushing
Through grass had ceased, there was only the hushing

Of a windless wind in the daisy tops,
And the jar stalks make when a grasshopper hops.

Every now and then a bee boomed over
The black-eyed Susans in search of clover,

And crickets shrilled as crickets do:
One—two. One—two.

The cat-bird sang with his head in the air,
And the sun's bright fingers poked here and there,

Past leaf, and branch, and needle, and cone.
But the stone men stood like men of stone.

Each man lifted a dull stone hand
And his fingers felt like weaving sand,

And his feet seemed standing on a ball
Which tossed and turned in a waterfall.

Each man heard a shot somewhere
Dropping out of the distant air.

But the screaming saws no longer said
"Evelyn Ray," for the men were dead.

. . . . . .

I often think of Evelyn Ray.
What did she do, what did she say?
Did she ever chance to pass that way?

I remember it as a lovely spot
Where a cat-bird sang. When he heard the shot,
Did he fly away? I have quite forgot.

When I went there last, he was singing again
Through a little fleeting, misty rain,
And pine-cones lay where they had lain.

This is the tale as I heard it when
I was young from a man who was threescore and ten.
A lady of clay and two stone men.

A pretty problem is here, no doubt,
If you have a fancy to work it out:
What happens to stone when clay is about?

Muse upon it as long as you will,
I think myself it will baffle your skill,
And your answer will be what mine is—nil.

But every sunny Summer's day
I am teased with the thought of Evelyn Ray,
Poor little image of painted clay.
And Heigh-o! I say.
What if there be a judgment-day?

What if all religions be true,
And Gabriel's trumpet blow for you
And blow for them—what will you do?

Evelyn Ray, will you rise alone?
Or will your lovers of dull gray stone
Pace beside you through the wan

Twilight of that bitter day
To be judged as stone and judged as clay,
And no one to say the judgment nay?

Better be nothing, Evelyn Ray,
A handful of buttercups that sway
In the wind for a children's holiday.

For earth to earth is the best we know,
Where the good blind worms push to and fro
Turning us into the seeds which grow,

And lovers and ladies are dead indeed,
Lost in the sap of a flower seed.
Is this, think you, a sorry creed?

Well, be it so, for the world is wide
And opinions jostle on every side.
What has always been hidden will always hide.

And every year when the fields are high
With oat grass, and red top, and timothy,
I know that a creed is the shell of a lie.

Peace be with you, Evelyn Ray,
And to your lovers, if so it may,
For earth made stone and earth made clay.

THE TAXI

When I go away from you
The world beats dead
Like a slackened drum.
I call out for you against the jutted stars
And shout into the ridges of the wind.
Streets coming fast,
One after the other,
Wedge you away from me,

And the lamps of the city prick my eyes
So that I can no longer see your face.
Why should I leave you,
To wound myself upon the sharp edges of the night?

IN EXCELSIS

You—you
Your shadow is sunlight on a plate of silver;
Your footsteps, the seeding-place of lilies;
Your hands moving, a chime of bells across a windless air.

The movement of your hands is the long, golden running of light from a rising sun;
It is the hopping of birds upon a garden-path.

As the perfume of jonquils, you come forth in the morning.
Young horses are not more sudden than your thought,
Your words are bees about a pear-tree,
Your fancies are the gold-and-black striped wasps buzzing among red apples.
I drink your lips,
I eat the whiteness of your hands and feet.
My mouth is open,
As a new jar I am empty and open.
Like white water are you who fill the cup of my mouth,
Like a brook of water thronged with lilies.

You are frozen as the clouds,
You are far and sweet as the high clouds.
I dare reach to you,
I dare touch the rim of your brightness.
I leap beyond the winds,
I cry and shout,
For my throat is keen as a sword
Sharpened on a hone of ivory.
My throat sings the joy of my eyes,
The rushing gladness of my love.

How has the rainbow fallen upon my heart?
How have I snared the seas to lie in my fingers
And caught the sky to be a cover for my head?

How have you come to dwell with me,
Compassing me with the four circles of your mystic lightness,
So that I say "Glory! Glory!" and bow before you
As to a shrine?

Do I tease myself that morning is morning and a day after?
Do I think the air a condescension,
The earth a politeness,
Heaven a boon deserving thanks?
So you—air—earth—heaven—
I do not thank you,
I take you,
I live.
And those things which I say in consequence
Are rubies mortised in a gate of stone.

MEETING-HOUSE HILL

I must be mad, or very tired,
When the curve of a blue bay beyond a railroad track
Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden springing of a tune,
And the sight of a white church above thin trees in a city square
Amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.
Clear, reticent, superbly final,
With the pillars of its portico refined to a cautious elegance,
It dominates the weak trees,
And the shot of its spire
Is cool and candid,
Rising into an unresisting sky.

Strange meeting-house
Pausing a moment upon a squalid hill-top.
I watch the spire sweeping the sky,
I am dizzy with the movement of the sky;
I might be watching a mast
With its royals set full
Straining before a two-reef breeze.
I might be sighting a tea-clipper,
Tacking into the blue bay,

Just back from Canton
With her hold full of green and blue porcelain
And a Chinese coolie leaning over the rail
Gazing at the white spire
With dull, sea-spent eyes.

LILACS

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
Your great puffs of flowers
Are everywhere in this my New England.
Among your heart-shaped leaves
Orange orioles hop like music-box birds and sing
Their little weak soft songs;
In the crooks of your branches
The bright eyes of song sparrows sitting on spotted eggs
Peer restlessly through the light and shadow
Of all Springs.
Lilacs in dooryards
Holding quiet conversations with an early moon;
Lilacs watching a deserted house
Settling sideways into the grass of an old road;
Lilacs, wind-beaten, staggering under a lopsided shock of bloom
Above a cellar dug into a hill.
You are everywhere.
You were everywhere.
You tapped the window when the preacher preached his sermon,
And ran along the road beside the boy going to school.
You stood by pasture-bars to give the cows good milking,
You persuaded the housewife that her dish-pan was of silver
And her husband an image of pure gold.
You flaunted the fragrance of your blossoms
Through the wide doors of Custom Houses—
You, and sandalwood, and tea,
Charging the noses of quill-driving clerks
When a ship was in from China.

You called to them: "Goose-quill men, goose-quill men,
May is a month for flitting,"
Until they writhed on their high stools
And wrote poetry on their letter-sheets behind the propped-up ledgers.
Paradoxical New England clerks,
Writing inventories in ledgers, reading the "Song of Solomon" at night,
So many verses before bedtime,
Because it was the Bible.
The dead fed you
Amid the slant stones of graveyards.
Pale ghosts who planted you
Came in the night time
And let their thin hair blow through your clustered stems.
You are of the green sea,
And of the stone hills which reach a long distance.
You are of elm-shaded streets with little shops where they sell kites and marbles,
You are of great parks where every one walks and nobody is at home.
You cover the blind sides of greenhouses
And lean over the top to say a hurry-word through the glass
To your friends, the grapes, inside.

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
You have forgotten your Eastern origin,
The veiled women with eyes like panthers,
The swollen, aggressive turbans of jeweled Pashas.
Now you are a very decent flower,
A reticent flower,
A curiously clear-cut, candid flower,
Standing beside clean doorways,
Friendly to a house-cat and a pair of spectacles,
Making poetry out of a bit of moonlight
And a hundred or two sharp blossoms.

Maine knows you,
Has for years and years;
New Hampshire knows you,
And Massachusetts
And Vermont.
Cape Cod starts you along the beaches to Rhode Island;
Connecticut takes you from a river to the sea.
You are brighter than apples,
Sweeter than tulips,
You are the great flood of our souls
Bursting above the leaf-shapes of our hearts,
You are the smell of all Summers,
The love of wives and children,
The recollection of the gardens of little children,
You are State Houses and Charters
And the familiar treading of the foot to and fro on a road it
knows.
May is lilac here in New England,
May is a thrush singing "Sun up!" on a tip-top ash-tree,
May is white clouds behind pine-trees
Puffed out and marching upon a blue sky.
May is a green as no other,
May is much sun through small leaves,
May is soft earth,
And apple-blossoms,
And windows open to a South wind.
May is a full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under all the soil of New England,
Lilac in me because I am New England,
Because my roots are in it,
Because my leaves are of it,
Because my flowers are for it,

Because it is my country
And I speak to it of itself
And sing of it with my own voice
Since certainly it is mine.

RIDGELY TORRENCE

(Frederic) Ridgely Torrence was born at Xenia, Ohio, November 27, 1875, and was educated at Miami and Princeton University. For several years he was librarian of the Astor Library in New York City (1897-1901), later assuming an editorial position on the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. At present he is the poetry editor of *The New Republic.*

His first volume, *The House of a Hundred Lights* (1900), bears the grave subtitle "A Psalm of Experience after Reading a Couplet of Bidpai" and is a half-whimsical, half-searching hodge-podge of philosophy, love lyrics, artlessness and impudence. The influence of Omar Khayyám and Richard Hovey is apparent but not too dominant; Torrence saves himself on the very verge of sentimentality and rhetoric by a chuckle, an adroit right-about-face.

It was not until a quarter of a century later that Torrence published his second volume of verse. In the meantime, poems of his had attracted immediate attention upon their appearance in magazines and a few of his lyrics had been quoted so often that they were familiar to those who had never heard of Torrence's other work. Torrence had remained in the peculiar position of one whose best verse was not only unprocurable, but unprinted. *Hesperides* (1925) remedied this strange circumstance. Like his first volume, this is not a large book—Torrence is not a voluminous writer—but these one hundred pages contain definite and distinguished poetry. In *Hesperides* one finds the magnificent "Eye-Witness," a most original treatment of the theme of Christ's second coming, the purely lyrical "The Singers in a Cloud" and that brief epic, "The Bird and the Tree" which is as famous as it is stirring.

Between Torrence's earliest and most recent volume, three of his plays were published: *El Dorado* (1903), *Abelard and Héloise* (1907), and *Granny Maumee, The Rider of Dreams, Simon the Cyrenian* (1917). The last group, being three plays for a Negro theater, contains the best of Torrence's dramatic writing. He has caught here, particularly in *Granny Maumee* and *The Rider of Dreams*, something of that high color which the Negro himself is only beginning to reflect.

THE BIRD AND THE TREE[1]

Blackbird, blackbird in the cage,
There's something wrong tonight.
Far off the sheriff's footfall dies,
The minutes crawl like last year's flies
Between the bars, and like an age
The hours are long tonight.

The sky is like a heavy lid
Out here beyond the door tonight.
What's that? A mutter down the street.
What's that? The sound of yells and feet.
For what you didn't do or did
You'll pay the score tonight.

No use to reek with reddened sweat,
No use to whimper and to sweat.
They've got the rope; they've got the guns,
They've got the courage and the guns;
An' that's the reason why tonight
No use to ask them any more.
They'll fire the answer through the door—
You're out to die tonight.

There where the lonely cross-road lies,
There is no place to make replies;
But silence, inch by inch, is there,
And the right limb for a lynch is there;
And a lean daw waits for both your eyes,
Blackbird.

Perhaps you'll meet again some place.
Look for the mask upon the face;
That's the way you'll know them there—
A white mask to hide the face.
And you can halt and show them there
The things that they are deaf to now,
And they can tell you what they meant—
To wash the blood with blood. But how
If you are innocent?

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[1] Compare the poem on the same subject on page 144.

Blackbird singer, blackbird mute,
They choked the seed you might have found.
Out of a thorny field you go—
For you it may be better so—
And leave the sowers of the ground
To eat the harvest of the fruit,
Blackbird.

THE SON

(*Southern Ohio Market Town*)

I heard an old farm-wife,
Selling some barley,
Mingle her life with life
And the name "Charley."

Saying: "The crop's all in,
We're about through now;
Long nights will soon begin,
We're just us two now.

"Twelve bushels at sixty cents,
It's all I carried—
He sickened making fence;
He was to be married—

"It feels like frost was near—
His hair was curly.
The spring was late that year,
But the harvest early."

ROBERT FROST

Although known as the chief interpreter of New England, Robert (Lee) Frost was born in San Francisco, California, March 26, 1875. His father, born in New Hampshire, taught school, edited a paper, entered politics, and moved to San Francisco where his "copperhead" sympathy with the South led him to christen his son Robert Lee. Frost's mother, after the death of her husband, supported herself and her children by teaching school; bringing the family back East to the towns and hills where, for eight generations, his forefathers had lived and where, much later, Frost was to uphold the tradition by lecturing, accepting an "idle professorship" ("being a sort of poetic radiator") at Amherst, and buying farms in Vermont. After graduating from the high school at Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1892, Frost entered Dartmouth College, where he remained only a few months. The routine of study was too much for him and, wishing to keep his mind free for creative work, he decided to earn his living and became a bobbin-boy in one of the mills at Lawrence. He had already begun to write poetry; a few of his verses had appeared in *The Independent.* But the strange, soil-flavored quality which even then distinguished his lines was not relished by the editors, and the very magazines to which he sent poems that today are famous rejected his verse with unanimity. For twenty years Frost continued to write his highly characteristic work in spite of the discouraging apathy, and for twenty years the poet remained unknown.

In 1897, two years after his marriage, Frost moved his family to Cambridge, Massachusetts, entering Harvard in a final determination to achieve culture. This time he followed the curriculum for two years, but at the end of that dry period he stopped trying to learn and started to teach. (Curiously enough, though Frost made light of and even ridiculed his scholarship, his marks in Greek and the classical studies were always exceptionally high.) For three years he taught school, made shoes, edited a weekly paper, and in 1900 became a farmer at Derry, New Hampshire. During the next eleven years Frost labored to wrest a living from stubborn hills with scant success. Loneliness claimed him for its own; the rocks refused to give him a living; the literary world continued to remain oblivious of his existence. Frost sought a change of environment and, after a few years' teaching at Derry and Plymouth, New Hampshire, sold his farm and, with his wife and four children, sailed for England in September, 1912.

For the first time in his life, Frost moved in a literary world. Groups merged, dissolved and separated over night; controversy and creation were in the air. A friendship was established with the poets Abercrombie, Brooke and Gibson; a close intimacy with Edward Thomas. Here Frost wrote most of his longer narratives, took his lyrics to a publisher with few hopes, went back to the suburban town of Beaconsfield and turned to other matters. A few months later *A Boy's Will* (1913) was published and Frost was recognized at once as one of the authentic voices of modern poetry.

A Boy's Will is seemingly subjective; in spite of certain reminiscences of Browning it is no set of derivations. In *A Boy's Will* Frost is not yet completely in possession of his own idiom; but the *timbre* is recognizably his. No one but Frost could have written "Reluctance" or "The Tuft of Flowers." Wholly lyrical, this volume, lacking the concentrated emotion of his subsequent works, is a significant introduction to the following book, which became an international classic. Early in 1914, Frost leased a small place in Gloucestershire; in the spring of the same year, *North of Boston* (1914), one of the most intensely American books ever printed, was published in England. (See Preface.) This is, as he has called it, a "book of people." And it is more than that—it is a book of backgrounds as living and dramatic as the people they overshadow. Frost vivifies a stone wall, an empty cottage, a grindstone, a mountain, a forgotten wood-pile left

> To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
> With the slow, smokeless burning of decay.

North of Boston, like its successor, contains much of the finest poetry of our time. Rich in its actualities, richer in its spiritual values, every line moves with the double force of observation and implication. The very first poem in the book illustrates this power of character and symbolism. Although Frost is not arguing for anything in particular, one senses here something more than the enemies of walls. In "Mending Wall," we see two elemental and opposed forces. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall," insists the seeker after causes; "Good fences make good neighbors," doggedly replies the literal-minded lover of tradition. Here, beneath the whimsical turns and pungency of expression, we have the essence of nationalism versus the internationalist: the struggle, though the poet would be the last to prod the point, between blind responsibility and questioning iconoclasm.

So with all of Frost's characters. Like the worn-out incompetent in "The Death of the Hired Man" (one of the finest *genre* pictures of our time), or the autobiographical country boy "climbing black branches up a snow white trunk toward heaven" in "Birches," or the positive, tight-lipped old lady in "The Black Cottage," his people are always amplified through the poet's circumlocutory but precise psychology. They remain close to their soil. Frost's monologs and dramatic idyls, written in a conversational blank verse, establish the connection between the vernacular and the language of literature; they remain rooted in realism. But Frost is never a photographic realist. "There are," he once said, "two types of realist—the one who offers a good deal of dirt with his potato to show that it is a real one; and the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean. I'm inclined to be the second kind. . . . To me, the thing that art does for life is to clean it, to strip it to form."

In March, 1915, Frost came back to America—to a hill outside of Franconia, New Hampshire. *North of Boston* had been reprinted in the United States and its author, who had left the country an unknown writer, returned to find himself famous. *Mountain Interval,* containing some of Frost's most characteristic poems ("Birches," and "An Old Man's Winter Night" are typical), appeared in 1916. The idiom is the same as in the earlier volumes, but the notes are more varied, the lyrics intensified, the assurance is stronger.

The subtle variations of the tones of speech find their sympathetic reporter here; the lines disclose delicate shades of emphasis in the way they present an entire scene by giving only a significant detail. Altogether natural, yet fanciful no less than realistic, this poetry escapes labels, "but," Frost once said, with a suspicion of a twinkle, "if I must be classified as a poet, I might be called a Synecdochist; for I prefer the synecdoche in poetry—that figure of speech in which we use a part for the whole."

New Hampshire (1923), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the best volume of poetry published in 1923, synthesizes Frost's qualities: it combines the stark unity of *North of Boston* and the diffused geniality of *Mountain Interval.* If one thing predominates, it is a feeling of quiet classicism; the poet has lowered his voice but not the strength of his convictions. To say, as was said, that Frost gives us a poetry "without the delight of the senses, without the glow of warm feeling" is—particularly when faced with *New Hampshire*—to utter an absurdity. Frost, in spite of a superficial underemphasis, does not hesitate to declare his close affection. Such poems as "Two Look at Two," with its tremendous wave of love, "To Earthward," with its unreserved intensity, even the brilliantly condensed "Fire and Ice," with its candidly registered passion—all these brim with a physical radiance, with the very delight and pain of the senses. Nor is the fanciful by-play, the sly banter so characteristic of this poet, absent from the volume. Who but Frost could put so whimsical an accent in the farewell to an orchard entitled "Good-by and Keep Cold"; who but he could summon, with so few strokes, the frightened colt "with one forefoot on the wall, the other curled at his breast" in "The Runaway." The very scheme of *New Hampshire* is an extended whimsicality: he offers the contents of the volume as a series of explanatory notes (and grace notes) to the title poem, which is supposed to be the book's *raison d'être.* The long poems (the "notes") rank with the narrative monologs in *North of Boston;* the "grace notes" contain not merely Frost's finest lines but some of the most haunting lyrics ever written by an American. Such a poem as "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" once in the mind of a reader will never leave it. Had Frost written nothing but these thirty "grace notes" his place in poetry would be assured. A revised *Selected Poems* (1928) and a rearranged *Collected Poems* (1930) confirmed the conclusions; the unpretentious bucolics had become contemporary classics.

It has been said that Frost's work suffers from an exclusiveness, and even his most ardent admirers would be willing to admit that his is not an indiscriminately inclusive passion like Whitman's. But Frost loves what he loves with a fierce attachment, a tenderness fixed beyond a more easily transferred regard. His devotion to the intimacies of earth is, even more than Wordsworth's, rich, almost inordinate in its fidelity; what his emotion (or his poetry) may lack in windy range, is trebly compensated for by its untroubled depths.

This is more true than ever of *West-Running Brook* (1928) which was hailed with loud—and misleading—enthusiasm. No contemporary poet received more praise than Frost, and none was more praised for the wrong attributes. As late as 1928, most of the critics were surprised that the writer identified with the long monologues in *North of Boston* should turn to lyrics, forgetting that Frost's first volume (written in the 1890's and published twenty years later) was wholly and insistently lyrical. One reviewer, echoing the false platitude concerning New England bleakness, applauded Frost's almost colorless reticence, his "preference for black and white." Another made the discovery that "where he was formerly content to limn a landscape . . . here the emphasis is primarily the poet's emotion." A more understanding consideration of Frost's poetry would have instructed the critics. They would have seen that no volumes have ever been less black and white, no poetry so delicately shaded. The so-called inhibitions disappear upon rereading. Frost's poems are only superficially reticent; actually they are profound and personal revelations. Frost has never been "content to limn a landscape." He cannot suggest a character or a countryside without informing the subject with his own philosophy, a philosophy whose bantering accents cannot hide a moral earnestness. Beyond the fact ("the dearest dream that labor knows"), beyond the tone of voice, which is—at least technically—the poet's first concern, there is that ardent and unifying emotion which is Frost's peculiar quality and his essential spirit. Nothing could prove it more fully than the title-poem with its seemingly casual but actually cosmic philosophy.

West-Running Brook is a reflection and restatement of all that has gone before. The autobiographical references are a little more outspoken; Amy Lowell's assertion that "there is no poem which has San Francisco as a background nor which seems to owe its inception to the author's early life" is answered again and again by poems which are packed with the poet's youth. Thus a student will learn that the presumably "late" poem entitled "On Going Unnoticed" was written as early as 1901; the poem "Bereft" was conceived about 1893; and "Once by the Pacific" is half-humorously dated "as of about 1880"—at which time the poet was exactly six years old.

In the new volume, Frost maintains his rôle of half-earnest synecdochist. Here, again, offering the part for the whole, he reestablishes the force of suggestion and reaffirms his conviction: "All that an artist needs is samples." Parsimony is achieved in every one of the new poems. It sharpens the ruminating accents of "Tree at My Window," fastens the epigrammatic irony of "The Peaceful Shepherd," quickens the somber power of "Bereft" and "Once by the Pacific," points the teasing play of "The Bear." It is, parenthetically, interesting to observe how Frost's poetry answers the charge that he is unremittingly grave; poems as late as "The Egg and the Machine" and as early as "Brown's Descent" have not only that talk-flavored tone which he cherishes but a humor pungent and broad. The ripe repose, the banked passions, the nicely blended tenderness and humor are everywhere. Here neighborliness is universalized and localism is a province of humanity. But beneath all is the individual to whom, as G. R. Elliott points out, the "eternal mystery" is "eternal appetite under eternal control."

Growth? Change? A new note? The answers may be found in two lines of one of Frost's first poems, a premonitory couplet written before 1900:

They would not find me changed from him they knew,
Only more sure of all I thought was true.

No reviewer has written, no critic will write, a better summary.

THE PASTURE

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I shan't be gone long.—You come too.

THE TUFT OF FLOWERS

I went to turn the grass once after one
Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.

The dew was gone that made his blade so keen
Before I came to view the leveled scene.

I looked for him behind an isle of trees;
I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
And I must be, as he had been,—alone,

"As all must be," I said within my heart,
"Whether they work together or apart."

But as I said it, swift there passed me by
On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

Seeking with memories grown dim over night
Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.

And once I marked his flight go round and round,
As where some flower lay withering on the ground.

And then he flew as far as eye could see,
And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply,
And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first, and led my eye to look
At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook,

A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared
Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

I left my place to know them by their name,
Finding them butterfly-weed when I came.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus,
By leaving them to flourish, not for us,

Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,
But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.

The butterfly and I had lit upon,
Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,

That made me hear the wakening birds around,
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,

And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;

But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;

And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.

"Men work together," I told him from the heart,
"Whether they work together or apart."

RELUCTANCE

Out through the fields and the woods
  And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
  And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
  And lo, it is ended.

The leaves are all dead on the ground,
  Save those that the oak is keeping
To ravel them one by one
  And let them go scraping and creeping
Out over the crusted snow,
  When others are sleeping.

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
  No longer blown hither and thither;
The last lone aster is gone;
  The flowers of the witch-hazel wither;
The heart is still aching to seek,
  But the feet question "Whither?"

Ah, when to the heart of man
  Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things
  To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
  Of a love or a season?

MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper bowlders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the bowlders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple-orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down!" I could say "elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there,
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness, as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

THE COW IN APPLE-TIME

Something inspires the only cow of late
To make no more of a wall than an open gate,
And think no more of wall-builders than fools.
Her face is flecked with pomace and she drools
A cider sirup. Having tasted fruit,
She scorns a pasture withering to the root.
She runs from tree to tree where lie and sweeten
The windfalls spiked with stubble and worm-eaten.
She leaves them bitten when she has to fly.
She bellows on a knoll against the sky.
Her udder shrivels and the milk goes dry.

THE DEATH OF THE HIRED MAN

Mary sat musing on the lamp-flame at the table
Waiting for Warren. When she heard his step,
She ran on tip-toe down the darkened passage
To meet him in the doorway with the news
And put him on his guard. "Silas is back."
She pushed him outward with her through the door
And shut it after her. "Be kind," she said.
She took the market things from Warren's arms
And set them on the porch, then drew him down
To sit beside her on the wooden steps.

"When was I ever anything but kind to him?
But I'll not have the fellow back," he said.
"I told him so last haying, didn't I?
'If he left then,' I said, 'that ended it.'
What good is he? Who else will harbor him
At his age for the little he can do?
What help he is there's no depending on.
Off he goes always when I need him most.
'He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,
Enough at least to buy tobacco with,
So he won't have to beg and be beholden.'
'All right,' I say, 'I can't afford to pay
Any fixed wages, though I wish I could.'
'Some one else can.' 'Then some one else will have to.'
I shouldn't mind his bettering himself
If that was what it was. You can be certain,
When he begins like that, there's some one at him
Trying to coax him off with pocket-money,—
In haying time, when any help is scarce.
In winter he comes back to us. I'm done."

"Sh! not so loud: he'll hear you," Mary said.

"I want him to: he'll have to soon or late."

"He's worn out. He's asleep beside the stove.
When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,
Huddled against the barn-door fast asleep,
A miserable sight, and frightening, too—
You needn't smile—I didn't recognize him—
I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed.
Wait till you see."

"Where did you say he'd been?"

"He didn't say. I dragged him to the house,
And gave him tea and tried to make him smoke.
I tried to make him talk about his travels,
Nothing would do: he just kept nodding off."

"What did he say? Did he say anything?"

"But little."

"Anything? Mary, confess
He said he'd come to ditch the meadow for me."

"Warren!"

"But did he? I just want to know."

"Of course he did. What would you have him say?
Surely you wouldn't grudge the poor old man
Some humble way to save his self-respect.
He added, if you really care to know,
He meant to clear the upper pasture, too.
That sounds like something you have heard before?
Warren, I wish you could have heard the way
He jumbled everything. I stopped to look
Two or three times—he made me feel so queer—
To see if he was talking in his sleep.
He ran on Harold Wilson—you remember—
The boy you had in haying four years since.
He's finished school, and teaching in his college.
Silas declares you'll have to get him back.
He says they two will make a team for work:
Between them they will lay this farm as smooth!
The way he mixed that in with other things.
He thinks young Wilson a likely lad, though daft
On education—you know how they fought
All through July under the blazing sun,
Silas up on the cart to build the load,
Harold along beside to pitch it on."

"Yes, I took care to keep well out of earshot."

"Well, those days trouble Silas like a dream.
You wouldn't think they would. How some things linger!
Harold's young college boy's assurance piqued him.
After so many years he still keeps finding
Good arguments he sees he might have used.
I sympathize. I know just how it feels
To think of the right thing to say too late.
Harold's associated in his mind with Latin.
He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying
He studied Latin like the violin

Because he liked it—that an argument!
He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong—
Which showed how much good school had ever done him.
He wanted to go over that. But most of all
He thinks if he could have another chance
To teach him how to build a load of hay—"

"I know, that's Silas' one accomplishment.
He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference,
So he can find and easily dislodge it
In the unloading. Silas does that well.
He takes it out in bunches like birds' nests.
You never see him standing on the hay
He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself."

"He thinks if he could teach him that, he'd be
Some good perhaps to some one in the world.
He hates to see a boy the fool of books.
Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,
And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different."

Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
As if she played unheard the tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night.
"Warren," she said, "he has come home to die:
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."

"Home," he mocked gently.

"Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail."

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in."

"I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve."

Warren leaned out and took a step or two,
Picked up a little stick, and brought it back
And broke it in his hand and tossed it by.
"Silas has better claim on us, you think,
Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles
As the road winds would bring him to his door.
Silas has walked that far no doubt today.
Why didn't he go there? His brother's rich,
A somebody—director in the bank."

"He never told us that."

"We know it though."

"I think his brother ought to help, of course.
I'll see to that if there is need. He ought of right
To take him in, and might be willing to—
He may be better than appearances.
But have some pity on Silas. Do you think
If he'd had any pride in claiming kin
Or anything he looked for from his brother,
He'd keep so still about him all this time?"

"I wonder what's between them."

"I can tell you.
Silas is what he is—we wouldn't mind him—
But just the kind that kinsfolk can't abide.
He never did a thing so very bad.
He don't know why he isn't quite as good
As any one. He won't be made ashamed
To please his brother, worthless though he is."

"I can't think Si ever hurt any one."

"No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay
And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back.

He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge.
You must go in and see what you can do.
I made the bed up for him there tonight.
You'll be surprised at him—how much he's broken.
His working days are done; I'm sure of it."

"I'd not be in a hurry to say that."

"I haven't been. Go, look, see for yourself.
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

Warren returned—too soon, it seemed to her,
Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.

"Warren?" she questioned.

"Dead," was all he answered.

AFTER APPLE-PICKING

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.

But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem-end and blossom-end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

AN OLD MAN'S WINTER NIGHT

All out of doors looked darkly in at him
Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,
That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.
What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze
Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.
What kept him from remembering what it was
That brought him to that creaking room was age.
He stood with barrels round him—at a loss.
And having scared the cellar under him

In clomping there, he scared it once again
In clomping off; and scared the outer night,
Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar
Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
But nothing so like beating on a box.
A light he was to no one but himself
Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what;
A quiet light, and then not even that.
He consigned to the moon, such as she was,
So late-arising, to the broken moon
As better than the sun in any case
For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,
His icicles along the wall to keep;
And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
One aged man—one man—can't fill a house,
A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
It's thus he does it of a winter night.

BIRCHES

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the line of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair

Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.

So was I once myself a swinger of birches;
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

BROWN'S DESCENT

OR, THE WILLY-NILLY SLIDE

Brown lived at such a lofty farm
That every one for miles could see
His lantern when he did his chores
In winter after half-past three.

And many must have seen him make
His wild descent from there one night,
'Cross lots, 'cross walls, 'cross everything,
Describing rings of lantern light.

Between the house and barn the gale
Got him by something he had on
And blew him out on the icy crust
That cased the world, and he was gone!

Walls were all buried, trees were few:
He saw no stay unless he stove
A hole in somewhere with his heel.
But though repeatedly he strove

And stamped and said things to himself,
And sometimes something seemed to yield,
He gained no foothold, but pursued
His journey down from field to field.

Sometimes he came with arms outspread
Like wings revolving in the scene
Upon his longer axis, and
With no small dignity of mien.

Faster or slower as he chanced,
Sitting or standing as he chose,
According as he feared to risk
His neck, or thought to spare his clothes,

He never let the lantern drop.
And some exclaimed who saw afar
The figure he described with it,
"I wonder what those signals are

"Brown makes at such an hour of night!
  He's celebrating something strange.
I wonder if he's sold his farm,
  Or been made Master of the Grange."

He reeled, he lurched, he bobbed, he checked;
  He fell and made the lantern rattle
(But saved the light from going out).
  So half-way down he fought the battle

Incredulous of his own bad luck.
  And then becoming reconciled
To everything, he gave it up
  And came down like a coasting child.

"Well—I—be—" that was all he said,
  As standing in the river road,
He looked back up the slippery slope
  (Two miles it was) to his abode.

Sometimes as an authority
  On motor-cars, I'm asked if I
Should say our stock was petered out,
  And this is my sincere reply:

Yankees are what they always were.
  Don't think Brown ever gave up hope
Of getting home again because
  He couldn't climb that slippery slope;

Or even thought of standing there
  Until the January thaw
Should take the polish off the crust.
  He bowed with grace to natural law,

And then went round it on his feet,
  After the manner of our stock;
Not much concerned for those to whom,
  At that particular time o'clock,

It must have looked as if the course
He steered was really straight away
From that which he was headed for—
Not much concerned for them, I say,

But now he snapped his eyes three times;
Then shook his lantern, saying, "Ile's
'Bout out!" and took the long way home
By road, a matter of several miles.

THE RUNAWAY

Once when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, "Whose colt?"
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head
And snorted to us. And then he had to bolt.
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled,
And we saw him, or thought we saw him, dim and gray,
Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.
"I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.
He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes,
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know!
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."
And now he comes again with a clatter of stone
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.
"Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and take him in."

TO EARTHWARD

Love at the lips was touch
As sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much;
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,
The flow of—was it musk
From hidden grapevine springs
Down hill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those
Seemed strong when I was young;
The petal of the rose
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark
Of almost too much love,
The sweet of bitter bark
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred
I take away my hand
From leaning on it hard
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:
I long for weight and strength
To feel the earth as rough
To all my length.

FIRE AND ICE

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.

But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

TWO LOOK AT TWO

Love and forgetting might have carried them
A little further up the mountain side
With night so near, but not much further up.
They must have halted soon in any case
With thoughts of the path back, how rough it was
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;
When they were halted by a tumbled wall
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,
Spending what onward impulse they still had
In one last look the way they must not go,
On up the failing path, where, if a stone
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;
No footstep moved it. "This is all," they sighed,
"Good-night to woods." But not so; there was more.
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,
Like some up-ended bowlder split in two,
Was in her clouded eyes: they saw no fear there.
She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,
She could not trouble her mind with too long,
She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.
"*This,* then, is all. What more is there to ask?"
But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.
A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall as near the wall as they.
This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril.
Not the same doe come back into her place.
He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,
As if to ask, "Why don't you make some motion?

Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.
I doubt if you're as living as you look."
Thus till he had them almost feeling dared
To stretch a proffering hand—and a spell-breaking.
Then he too passed unscared along the wall.
Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.
"This *must* be all." It was all. Still they stood,
A great wave from it going over them,
As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor
Had made them certain earth returned their love.

A SKY PAIR

CANIS MAJOR

The Great Overdog,
That heavenly beast
With a star in one eye,
Gives a leap in the East.

He dances upright
All the way to the West,
And never once drops
On his forefeet to rest.

I'm a poor Underdog;
But tonight I will bark,
With the Great Overdog
That romps through the dark.

THE PEACEFUL SHEPHERD

If heaven were to do again,
And on the pasture bars
I leaned to line the figures in
Between the dotted stars,

I should be tempted to forget,
I think, the Crown of Rule,
The Scales of Trade, the Cross of Faith,
As hardly worth renewal.

For these have governed in our lives,
And see how men have warred!
The Cross, the Crown, the Scales, may all
As well have been the Sword.

BEREFT

Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar?
What would it take my standing there for,
Holding open a restive door,
Looking down hill to a frothy shore?
Summer was past and day was past.
Somber clouds on the West were massed.
Out in the porch's sagging floor
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad;
Word I was in my life alone;
Word I had no one left but God.

TREE AT MY WINDOW

Tree at my window, window tree,
My sash is lowered when night comes on;
But let there never be curtain drawn
Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground,
And thing next most diffuse to cloud,
Not all your light tongues talking aloud
Could be profound.

But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,
And if you have seen me when I slept,
You have seen me when I was taken and swept
And all but lost.

That day she put our heads together,
Fate had her imagination about her,
Your head so much concerned with outer,
Mine with inner, weather.

WEST-RUNNING BROOK

"Fred, where is north?"
"North? North is there, my love.
The brook runs west."
"West-running Brook then call it."
(West-running Brook men call it to this day.)
"What does it think it's doing running west
When all the other country brooks flow east
To reach the ocean? It must be the brook
Can trust itself to go by contraries
The way I can with you—and you with me—
Because we're—we're—I don't know what we are.
What are we?"
"Young or new?"
"We must be something.
We've said we two. Let's change that to we three.
As you and I are married to each other,
We'll both be married to the brook. We'll build
Our bridge across it, and the bridge shall be
Our arm thrown over it asleep beside it.
Look, look, it's waving to us with a wave
To let us know it hears me."
"Why, my dear,
That wave's been standing off this jut of shore—"
(The black stream, catching on a sunken rock,
Flung backward on itself in one white wave,
And the white water rode the black forever,
Not gaining but not losing, like a bird
White feathers from the struggle of whose breast
Flecked the dark stream and flecked the darker pool
Below the point, and were at last driven wrinkled
In a white scarf against the far shore alders.)
"That wave's been standing off this jut of shore
Ever since rivers, I was going to say,
Were made in heaven. It wasn't waved to us."

“It wasn’t, yet it was. If not to you
It was to me—in an annunciation.”

“Oh, if you take it off to lady-land,
As ’twere the country of the Amazons
We men must see you to the confines of
And leave you there, ourselves forbid to enter,—
It is your brook! I have no more to say.”

“Yes, you have, too. Go on. You thought of something.”

“Speaking of contraries, see how the brook
In that white wave runs counter to itself.
It is from that in water we were from
Long, long before we were from any creature.
Here we, in our impatience of the steps,
Get back to the beginning of beginnings,
The stream of everything that runs away.
Some say existence like a Pirouot
And Pirouette, forever in one place,
Stands still and dances, but it runs away,
It seriously, sadly, runs away
To fill the abyss’ void with emptiness.
It flows beside us in this water brook,
But it flows over us. It flows between us
To separate us for a panic moment.
It flows between us, over us, and *with* us.
And it is time, strength, tone, light, life and love
And even substance lapsing unsubstantial;
The universal cataract of death
That spends to nothingness—and unresisted,
Save by some strange resistance in itself,
Not just a swerving, but a throwing back,
As if regret were in it and were sacred.
It has this throwing backward on itself
So that the fall of most of it is always
Raising a little, sending up a little.
Our life runs down in sending up the clock.
The brook runs down in sending up our life.
The sun runs down in sending up the brook.
And there is something sending up the sun.

It is this backward motion toward the source,
Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
The tribute of the current to the source.
It is from this in nature we are from.
It is most us."
                    "Today will be the day
You said so."
                    "No, today will be the day
You said the brook was called West-running Brook."

"Today will be the day of what we both said."

ONCE BY THE PACIFIC

The shattered water made a misty din,
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
The sand was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent.
It looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Some one had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean water broken
Before God's last *Put out the light* was spoken.

THE BEAR

The bear puts both arms around the tree above her
And draws it down as if it were a lover
And its choke-cherries lips to kiss good-by,
Then lets it snap back upright in the sky.
Her next step rocks a bowlder on the wall
(She's making her cross-country in the fall.)
Her great weight creaks the barbed-wire in its staples
As she flings over and off down through the maples,
Leaving on one wire tooth a lock of hair.
Such is the uncaged progress of the bear.

The world has room to make a bear feel free;
The universe seems cramped to you and me.
Man acts more like a poor bear in a cage
That all day fights a nervous inward rage,
His mood rejecting all his mind suggests.
He paces back and forth and never rests
The toe-nail click and shuffle of his feet,
The telescope at one end of his beat,
And at the other end the microscope,
Two instruments of nearly equal hope,
And in conjunction giving quite a spread.
Or if he rests from scientific tread,
'Tis only to sit back and sway his head
Through ninety odd degrees of arc, it seems,
Between two metaphysical extremes.
He sits back on his fundamental butt
With lifted snout and eyes (if any) shut,
(He almost looks religious but he's not),
And back and forth he sways from cheek to cheek,
At one extreme agreeing with one Greek,
At the other agreeing with another Greek
Which may be thought, but only so to speak.
A baggy figure, equally pathetic
When sedentary and when peripatetic.

SAND DUNES

Sea waves are green and wet,
But up from where they die
Rise others vaster yet,
And those are brown and dry.

They are the sea made land
To come at the fisher town,
And bury in solid sand
The men she could not drown.

She may know cove and cape,
But she does not know mankind
If by any change of shape
She hopes to cut off mind.

Men left her a ship to sink;
They can leave her a hut as well,
And be but more free to think
For the one more cast-off shell.

THE LOVELY SHALL BE CHOOSERS

The Voice said, "Hurl her down!"

The Voices, "How far down?"

"Seven levels of the world."

"How much time have we?"

"Take twenty years.
She would refuse love safe with wealth and honor.
The Lovely shall be choosers, shall they?
Then let them choose!"

"Then we shall let her choose?"

"Yes, let her choose.
Take up the task beyond her choosing."

Invisible hands crowded on her shoulder
In readiness to weigh upon her.
But she stood straight still,
In broad round ear-rings, gold and jet with pearls,
And broad round suchlike brooch,
Her cheeks high colored,
Proud and the pride of friends.

The Voice asked, "You can let her choose?"

"Yes, we can let her and still triumph."

"Do it by joys. And leave her always blameless.
Be her first joy her wedding,
That though a wedding,
Is yet—well, something *they* know, he and she.
And after that her next joy
That though she grieves, her grief is secret:

Those friends know nothing of her grief to make it shameful.
Her third joy that though now they cannot help but know,
They move in pleasure too far off
To think much or much care.
Give her a child at either knee for fourth joy
To tell once and once only, for them never to forget,
How once she walked in brightness,
And make them see in the winter firelight.
But give her friends, for then she dares not tell
For their foregone incredulousness.
And be her next joy this:
Her never having deigned to tell them.
Make her among the humblest even
Seem to them less than they are.
Hopeless of being known for what she has been,
Failing of being loved for what she is,
Give her the comfort for her sixth of knowing
She fails from strangeness to a way of life
She came to from too high too late to learn.
Then send some *one* with eye to see
And wonder at her where she is
And words to wonder in her hearing how she came there,
But without time to stay and hear her story.
Be her last joy her heart's going out to this one
So that she almost speaks.

You know them—seven in all."

"Trust us," the Voices said.

THE EGG AND THE MACHINE

He gave the solid rail a hateful kick.
From far away there came an answering tick;
And then another tick. He knew the code:
His hate had roused an engine up the road.
He wished when he had had the track alone
He had attacked it with a club or stone
And bent some rail wide open like a switch
So as to wreck the engine in the ditch.
Too late, though, now to throw it down the bank;
Its click was rising to a nearer clank.

Here it came breasting like a horse in skirts.
(He stood well back for fear of scalding squirts.)
Then for a moment there was only size,
Confusion, and a roar that drowned the cries
He raised against the gods in the machine.
Then once again the sand-bank lay serene.
The traveler's eye picked up a turtle trail,
Between the dotted feet a streak of tail,
And followed it to where he made out vague,
But certain signs of buried turtle egg;
And probing with one finger not too rough,
He found suspicious sand, and sure enough
The pocket of a little turtle mine.
If there was one egg in it, there were nine,
Torpedo-like, with shell of gritty leather
All packed in sand to wait the trump together.
"You'd better not disturb me any more,"
He told the distance. "I am armed for war.
The next machine that has the power to pass
Will get this plasm in its goggle glass."

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

William Ellery Leonard was born at Plainfield, New Jersey, January 25, 1876. He received his A.M. at Harvard in 1899 and completed his studies at the Universities of Göttingen and Bonn. After traveling for several years throughout Europe, he became a teacher and has been professor of English in the University of Wisconsin since 1906.

The Vaunt of Man (1912) is a characteristic volume. Traditional in form and material, it is anything but conservative in spirit. Leonard's fervor speaks in the simplest of his quatrains and the strictest of his sonnets. This protesting passion is given an even wider sweep in *The Lynching Bee and Other Poems* (1920), the title-poem being an indictment in which the poet's outrage is heard with a new ironism.

Tutankhamen and After (1924) is an ambitious attempt to picture the continuity of man's life in three pages, but in spite of a few felicitous lines the title-poem is prosy. The shorter verses are more successful. It was a grave injustice to claim this as Leonard's "most representative volume." That distinction must be claimed by *Two Lives*, which was privately issued in 1923 and publicly offered in 1925. Reminiscent of Richard Dehmel's *Zwei Menschen,* this chain of sonnets compresses an intensity in which the effect of the cumulative drama is far greater than that of any single poem.

The Locomotive God (1927) is a strange document written in autobiographical prose. It is the narrative of a student and poet who ends as a neurotic confined by an unusual phobia within a few blocks' radius of his home. Disproportionate in its concern with trifles, painful as analysis of fevered imagination, the book has a personal interest beyond the case history.

A Son of Earth (1929) is composed of selections from Leonard's previous poetry with the exception of his translations and *Two Lives.* It, too, was arranged autobiographically "with reference to activities, aims, influences, crises." This larger collection suffers the same defects as *Two Lives;* its sincerity is compelling, its candor unreserved, but only a few pages could be offered as examples of poetry *per se. A Son of Earth* contains page after page of inversions and pomposities incredibly preserved; one can understand the youth that luxuriated in such *clichés* as "golden fee," "slumbering aeons," "shadowy woodlands," "white nymphs," "brazen trumpets," "immemorial tides," but it is hard to believe in a maturity that proudly reprints them. Rhetoric aside, there is wisdom here and wit, a malicious sparkle in the revised fables grouped under "Aesop and Hyssop."

Besides his original poetry, Leonard has published several volumes of translations of Beowulf, Empedocles and Lucretius as well as the set of paraphrases of the fables of Aesop.

THE IMAGE OF DELIGHT

O how came I that loved stars, moon, and flame,
And unimaginable wind and sea,
All inner shrines and temples of the free,
Legends and hopes and golden books of fame;
I that upon the mountain carved my name
With cliffs and clouds and eagles over me,
O how came I to stoop to loving thee—
I that had never stooped before to shame?

O 'twas not thee! Too eager of a white
Far beauty and a voice to answer mine,
Myself I built an image of delight,
Which all one purple day I deemed divine—
And when it vanished in the fiery night,
I lost not thee, nor any shape of thine.

TO THE VICTOR

Man's mind is larger than his brow of tears;
This hour is not my all of time; this place
My all of earth; nor this obscene disgrace
My all of life; and thy complacent sneers
Shall not pronounce my doom to my compeers
While the Hereafter lights me in the face,
And from the Past, as from the mountain's base,
Rise, as I rise, the long tumultuous cheers.
And who slays me must overcome a world:
Heroes at arms, and virgins who became
Mothers of children, prophecy and song;
Walls of old cities with their flags unfurled;
Peaks, headlands, ocean and its isles of fame—
And sun and moon and all that made me strong!

Alex Rogers was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1876, and was educated in the public schools of that city. After attempting various occupations, he became a writer of words for popular songs. Many of the "hits" of the Williams and Walker musical comedies were written by him; the name of Bert Williams was synonymous with "The Jonah Man" and "Nobody," which were created for him by Rogers. Two of his most characteristic lyrics appear in *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), an anthology edited by James Weldon Johnson.

"The Rain Song," to which Will Marion Cook, another gifted Negro, furnished infectious music, was originally a concerted number in one of the Williams and Walker burlesques. It is interesting to compare Rogers' version with the far older "Signs of Rain" by Edward Jenner. It is not only amusing but enlightening from an ethnographic standpoint to see how Rogers has localized many of Jenner's polished lines.

RAIN SONG

Bro. Simmons

"Walk right in, Brudder Wilson—how you feelin' today?"

Bro. Wilson

"Jes' tol'able, Brudder Simmons, but den I ginnerly feels dat
way."

Bro. Simmons

"Here's White an' Black an' Brown an' Green; how's all you
gent'mens been?"

Bro. White

"My health is good but my bus'ness slack."

Bro. Black

"I'se been suff'rin' lots wid pains in my back."

Bro. Brown

"My ole' ooman's sick, but *I'se* alright—"

Bro. Green

"Yes, I went aftuh Doctuh fuh her 'tuther night—"

Bro. Simmons

"Here's Sandy Turner, as I live!"

Bro. Turner

"Yes, I didn't 'spect to git here—but here I is!"

Bro. Simmons

"Now gent'mens, make you'selves to home,
Dare's nothin' to fear—my ole 'ooman's gone—
My stars, da weather's pow'ful warm—
I wouldn't be s'prised ef we had a storm."

Bro. Brown

"No, Brudder Simmons, we kin safely say
'Tain't gwine to be no storm today,
Kase here am facts dat's mighty plain
An' any time you sees 'em you kin look fuh rain:

"Any time you hears da cheers and tables crack
An' da folks wid rheumatics—dare jints is on da rack—"

All

"Lookout fuh rain, rain, rain."

Bro. Brown and Chorus

"When da ducks quack loud an' da peacocks cry,
An' da far off hills seems to be right nigh,
Prepare fuh rain, rain, rain!

"When da ole cat on da hearth wid her velvet paws
'Gins to wipin' over her whiskered jaws,
Sho' sign o' rain, rain, rain!

"When da frog's done changed his yaller vest,
An' in his brown suit he is dressed,
Mo' rain, an' still mo' rain!

"When you notice da air it stan's stock still,
An' da blackbird's voice it gits so awful shrill,
Dat am da time fuh rain.

"When yo' dog quits bones an' begins to fas',
An' when you see him eatin', he's eatin' grass:
Shoes', trues', cert'nes' sign ob rain!"

Refrain

"No, Brudder Simmons, we kin safely say,
'Tain't gwine tuh be no rain today.
Kase da sut [1] ain't fallin' an' da dogs ain't sleep,
An' you ain't seen no spiders fum dare cobwebs creep;
Last night da sun went bright to bed,
An' da moon ain't nevah once been seen to hang her head;
If youse watched all dis, den you kin safely say,
Dat dar ain't a-gwine to be no rain today.
No rain today!"

CARL SANDBURG

Carl (August) Sandburg was born of Swedish stock at Galesburg, Illinois, January 6, 1878. His schooling was haphazard; at thirteen he went to work on a milk wagon. During the next six years he was, in rapid succession, porter in a barber shop, scene-shifter in a cheap theater, truck-handler in a brickyard, turner apprentice in a pottery, dish-washer in Denver and Omaha hotels, harvest hand in Kansas wheatfields. These tasks equipped him, as no amount of learning could have done, to be the laureate of industrial America. When war with Spain was declared in 1898, Sandburg, avid for fresh adventure, enlisted in Company C, Sixth Illinois Volunteers.

On his return from the campaign in Porto Rico, Sandburg entered Lombard College in Galesburg and, for the first time, began to think in terms of literature. After leaving college, where he had been captain of the basket-ball team as well as editor-in-chief of the college paper, Sandburg did all manner of things to earn a living. He was advertising manager for a department store and worked as district organizer for the Social-Democratic party of Wisconsin. He became a salesman, a pamphleteer, a newspaperman. On the staff of a business magazine, he became a "safety first" expert, his articles on accident-prevention bringing him before manufacturers' conventions.

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[1] Sut = soot.

In 1904 Sandburg published the proverbial "slender sheaf," a tiny pamphlet of twenty-two poems, uneven in quality, but strangely like the work of the mature Sandburg in feeling. What is more, these experiments anticipated the very inflection of the later poems, with their spiritual kinship to Henley and Whitman; several of these early experiments (with the exception of the rhymed verses) might be placed, without seeming incongruous, in the later collections. The idiom of *Smoke and Steel* (1920) is more intensified, but it is the same idiom as that of "Milville" (1903), which begins:

Down in southern New Jersey they make glass.
By day and by night, the fires burn on in Milville and bid the sand let in the light.

Meanwhile the newspaperman was struggling to keep the poet alive. Until he was thirty-six years old Sandburg was totally unknown to the literary world. In 1914 a group of his poems appeared in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse;* during the same year one of the group (the now famous "Chicago") was awarded the Levinson prize of two hundred dollars. A little more than a year later his first, full-fledged book was published, and Sandburg "arrived."

Chicago Poems (1916) is full of ferment; it seethes with loose energy. If Frost is an intellectual aristocrat, Sandburg might be termed an emotional democrat. Here is exultation that is also exaltation. Sandburg's speech is simple and powerful; he uses slang as freely (and beautifully) as his predecessors used the now archaic tongue of their times. Never has the American vulgate been used with such artistry and effect. (See Preface.) Immediately cries of protest were heard: Sandburg was coarse and brutal; his work ugly and distorted; his language unrefined, unfit for poetry. His detractors forgot that Sandburg was brutal only to condemn brutality; that beneath his toughness, he was one of the tenderest of living poets; that, when he used colloquialisms and a richly metaphorical slang, he was searching for new poetic values in "limber, lasting, fierce words"—unconsciously answering Whitman who asked, "Do you suppose the liberties and brawn of These States have to do only with delicate lady-words? With gloved gentleman-words?"

Cornhuskers (1918) is another step forward; it is as sweeping as its forerunner and more sensitive. The gain in power and restraint is evident in the very first poem, a wide-swept vision of the prairie. Here is something of the surge of a Norse saga; *Cornhuskers* is keen with a salty vigor, a sympathy for all that is splendid and terrible in Nature. But the raw violence is restrained to the point of a half-withheld mysticism. There are, in this volume, dozens of those delicate perceptions of beauty that must astonish those who think that Sandburg can write only a big-fisted, rough-neck sort of poetry. As Sandburg has sounded some of the most *fortissimo* notes in modern poetry, he has also breathed some of its softest phrases. "Cool Tombs," one of the most poignant lyrics of our times, moves with a low music; "Grass" whispers as quietly as the earlier "Fog" stole in on stealthy, cat feet.

Smoke and Steel (1920) is the synthesis of its predecessors. In this collection, Sandburg has fused mood, accent and image. Whether the poet evokes the spirit of a jazz-band or, having had the radiance (the "flash crimson"), prays to touch life at its other extreme, this volume is not so vociferous as it is assured. Smoke-belching chimneys are here, quarries and great bowlders of iron-ribbed rock; here are titanic visions: the dreams of men and machinery. And silence is here—the silence of sleeping tenements and sun-soaked cornfields.

Slabs of the Sunburnt West (1923) is a fresh fusing: here in quick succession are the sardonic invectives of "And So Today," the rhapsody of "The Windy City" (an amplification of the early "Chicago"), and the panoramic title-poem. Although the book's chief exhibit is the amplitude of its longer poems, there are a few brevities (such as "Upstream") which have the vigor of a jubilant cry. Sandburg is still tempted to talk at the top of his voice, to bang the table and hurl his loudest epithets into the teeth of his opponents. But often he goes to the other extreme; he is likely to leave his material soft and loose instead of solidifying his emotions. There are times when the poet seems unsure whether or not he can furnish more than a clew to the half-realized wisps of his imagination. But though his meaning may not always be clear, there is no mistaking the power of his feeling nor the curious cadences of his music.

Good Morning, America (1928) is characteristically Sandburg at his best and worst. There are passages which are hopelessly enigmatic, passages which are only inflations of commonplace ideas. On the other hand, there are pages which are remarkable experiments in suspension, pages sensitive with a beauty delicately perceived. The thirty-eight "Tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry" with which the volume is prefaced are footnotes as well as prologues to his work in general, and the purely descriptive pieces are among his finest. Incidentally, the volume shows how far Sandburg has gone in critical esteem since the time when his *Chicago Poems* was openly derided, the title poem of *Good Morning, America* having been read as a Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard.

Besides his poetry, Sandburg has written three volumes of imaginative and, if one can conceive of such a thing, humorously mystical tales for children: *Rootabaga Stories* (1922), *Rootabaga Pigeons* (1923) and *Potato Face* (1930), the last being—so the poet and publisher insist—tales for adults of all ages. A collection of the Rootabaga stories was illustrated by Peggy Bacon in 1929. Eight years were spent traveling and studying documents for his vitalized *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (1926), and assembling material for his collection of native folk-tunes *The American Songbag* (1927).

In 1924 the poet perfected a unique lecture—part recital, part singing of American folk-tunes, part "circus," as he describes it —which he continued to give throughout the country. Accompanied by his guitar, Sandburg brought new values to the reading of poetry. His low-toned footnotes were full of philosophic asides; even his definitions had a flavor peculiarly their own. Speaking of realism and romanticism, he once told the following fable: "There was a man who did not find in his house all he desired. One day he came in to find his wife working with a workbasket full of bright silk threads. He caught up a handful. He held them tight for a moment. Then he opened his hand. The threads became hundreds of brilliant butterflies flying joyfully about the room. The man watched them. Then he opened his hand, gathered them all in, tightened his hold. They became silk threads; he returned them, to the workbasket. . . . And if you can believe that," Sandburg concluded with the ghost of a smile, "you are a romanticist."

Sandburg has been on the staff of the *Chicago Daily News* since 1919, and lives in Elmhurst, Illinois, near Chicago, and part of the year on the northern shore of Lake Michigan, "within earshot of frogs, silver peepers and evening waterfalls of songs."

TEN DEFINITIONS OF POETRY

1 Poetry is a projection across silence of cadences arranged to break that silence with definite intentions of echoes, syllables, wave lengths.

2 Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly the air.

3 Poetry is a series of explanations of life, fading off into horizons too swift for explanations.

4 Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable.

5 Poetry is a theorem of a yellow-silk handkerchief knotted with riddles, sealed in a balloon tied to the tail of a kite flying in a white wind against a blue sky in spring.

6 Poetry is the silence and speech between a wet struggling root of a flower and a sunlit blossom of that flower.

7 Poetry is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it.

8 Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away.

9 Poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits.

10 Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment.

CHICAGO

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:
They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who
sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and
say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so
proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job,
here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little
soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a
savage pitted against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding.
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with
white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man
laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never
lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and
under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker,
Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight
Handler to the Nation.

FOG

The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

GRASS

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

COOL TOMBS

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

NOCTURNE IN A DESERTED BRICKYARD

Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave line,
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

LIMITED

I am riding on a limited express, one of the crack trains of the nation.
Hurtling across the prairie into blue haze and dark air go fifteen all-steel coaches holding a thousand people.
(All the coaches shall be scrap and rust and all the men and women laughing in the diners and sleepers shall pass to ashes.)
I ask a man in the smoker where he is going and he answers: "Omaha."

FOUR PRELUDES ON PLAYTHINGS OF THE WIND

"The Past is a Bucket of Ashes."

1

The woman named Tomorrow
sits with a hairpin in her teeth
and takes her time
and does her hair the way she wants it
and fastens at last the last braid and coil
and puts the hairpin where it belongs
and turns and drawls: Well, what of it?
My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead.

2

The doors were cedar
and the panel strips of gold
and the girls were golden girls
and the panels read and the girls chanted:
  We are the greatest city,
  and the greatest nation:
  nothing like us ever was.
The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
  where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
  We are the greatest city,
  the greatest nation,
  nothing like us ever was.

3

It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
    a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
    to warble: We are the greatest city,
        the greatest nation,
        nothing like us ever was.

And while the singers sang
and the strong men listened
and paid the singers well,
    there were rats and lizards who listened
    . . . and the only listeners left now
    . . . are . . . the rats . . . and the lizards.
    And there are black crows
    crying, "Caw, caw,"
    bringing mud and sticks
    building a nest
    over the words carved
    on the doors where the panels were cedar
    and the strips on the panels were gold
    and the golden girls came singing:
        We are the greatest city,
        the greatest nation:
        nothing like us ever was.

The only singers now are crows crying, "Caw, caw,"
And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and doorways.
And the only listeners now are . . . the rats . . . and the
    lizards.

4

The feet of the rats
scribble on the doorsills;
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
chatter the pedigrees of the rats
and babble of the blood
and gabble of the breed
of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
of the rats.

And the wind shifts
and the dust on a doorsill shifts
and even the writing of the rat footprints
tells us nothing, nothing at all
about the greatest city, the greatest nation
where the strong men listened
and the women warbled: Nothing like us ever was.

A. E. F.[1]

There will be a rusty gun on the wall, sweetheart,
The rifle grooves curling with flakes of rust.
A spider will make a silver string nest in the darkest, warmest corner of it.
The trigger and the range-finder, they too will be rusty.
And no hands will polish the gun, and it will hang on the wall.
Forefingers and thumbs will point absently and casually toward it.
It will be spoken among half-forgotten, wished-to-be-forgotten things.
They will tell the spider: Go on, you're doing good work.

PRAYERS OF STEEL

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls;
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

JAZZ FANTASIA

Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos, sob on the long cool winding saxophones. Go to it, O jazzmen.

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[1] American Expeditionary Force.

Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy tin pans, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-hush with the slippery sandpaper.

Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops, moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible, cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle-cop, bang-bang! you jazzmen, bang altogether drums, traps, banjos, horns, tin cans—make two people fight on the top of a stairway and scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down the stairs.

Can the rough stuff . . . Now a Mississippi steamboat pushes up the night river with a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo . . . and the green lanterns calling to the high soft stars . . . a red moon rides on the humps of the low river hills. . . . Go to it, O jazzmen.

BLUE ISLAND INTERSECTION

Six street-ends come together here.
They feed people and wagons into the center.
In and out all day horses with thoughts of nose-bags,
Men with shovels, women with baskets and baby buggies.
Six ends of streets and no sleep for them all day.
The people and wagons come and go, out and in.
Triangles of banks and drug stores watch.
The policemen whistle, the trolley cars bump:
Wheels, wheels, feet, feet, all day.

In the false dawn when the chickens blink
And the east shakes a lazy baby toe at tomorrow,
And the east fixes a pink half-eye this way,
In the time when only one milk wagon crosses
These three streets, these six street-ends
It is the sleep time and they rest.
The triangle banks and drug stores rest.
The policeman is gone, his star and gun sleep.
The owl car blutters along in a sleep-walk.

FROM "SMOKE AND STEEL"

Smoke of the fields in spring is one,
Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.
Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a battleship funnel,
They all go up in a line with a smokestack,
Or they twist . . . in the slow twist . . . of the wind.

If the north wind comes they run to the south.
If the west wind comes they run to the east.
        By this sign
        all smokes
        know each other.
Smoke of the fields in spring and leaves in autumn,
Smoke of the finished steel, chilled and blue,
By the oath of work they swear: "I know you."

Hunted and hissed from the center
Deep down long ago when God made us over,
Deep down are the cinders we came from—
You and I and our heads of smoke.

. . . . . .

Some of the smokes God dropped on the job
Cross on the sky and count our years
And sing in the secrets of our numbers;
Sing their dawns and sing their evenings,
Sing an old log-fire song:
        You may put the damper up,
        You may put the damper down,
        The smoke goes up the chimney just the same.

Smoke of a city sunset skyline,
Smoke of a country dusk horizon—
        They cross on the sky and count our years.

. . . . . .

Smoke of a brick-red dust
        Winds on a spiral
        Out of the stacks
For a hidden and glimpsing moon.
This, said the bar-iron shed to the blooming mill,
This is the slang of coal and steel.

The day-gang hands it to the night-gang,
The night-gang hands it back.

Stammer at the slang of this—
Let us understand half of it.
In the rolling mills and sheet mills,
In the harr and boom of the blast fires,
The smoke changes its shadow
And men change their shadow;
A nigger, a wop, a bohunk changes.

A bar of steel—it is only
Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and the blood of a man.
A runner of fire ran in it, ran out, ran somewhere else,
And left smoke and the blood of a man
And the finished steel, chilled and blue.

So fire runs in, runs out, runs somewhere else again,
And the bar of steel is a gun, a wheel, a nail, a shovel,
A rudder under the sea, a steering-gear in the sky;
And always dark in the heart and through it,
Smoke and the blood of a man.
Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Gary, they make their steel with men.

In the blood of men and the ink of chimneys
The smoke nights write their oaths:
Smoke into steel and blood into steel;
Homestead, Braddock, Birmingham, they make their steel with men.
Smoke and blood is the mix of steel. . . .

LOSERS

If I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for a while;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all.

If I pass the burial spot of Nero
I shall say to the wind, "Well, well!"—
I who have fiddled in a world on fire,
I who have done so many stunts not worth the doing.

I am looking for the grave of Sinbad too.
I want to shake his ghost-hand and say,
"Neither of us died very early, did we?"

And the last sleeping-place of Nebuchadnezzar—
When I arrive there I shall tell the wind:
"You ate grass; I have eaten crow—
Who is better off now or next year?"

Jack Cade, John Brown, Jesse James,
There too I could sit down and stop for a while.
I think I could tell their headstones:
"God, let me remember all good losers."

I could ask people to throw ashes on their heads
In the name of that sergeant at Belleau Woods,
Walking into the drumfires, calling his men,
"Come on, you . . . Do you want to live forever?"

PRIMER LESSON

Look out how you use proud words.
When you let proud words go, it is not easy to call them back.
They wear long boots, hard boots; they walk off proud; they
    can't hear you calling—
Look out how you use proud words.

BROKEN-FACE GARGOYLES

All I can give you is broken-face gargoyles.
It is too early to sing and dance at funerals,
Though I can whisper to you I am looking for an undertaker
    humming a lullaby and throwing his feet in a swift and
    mystic buck-and-wing, now you see it and now you don't.

Fish to swim a pool in your garden flashing a speckled silver,
A basket of wine-saps filling your room with flame-dark for
    your eyes and the tang of valley orchards for your nose,
Such a beautiful pail of fish, such a beautiful peck of apples,
    I cannot bring you now.
It is too early and I am not footloose yet.

I shall come in the night when I come with a hammer and saw.
I shall come near your window, where you look out when
your eyes open in the morning,
And there I shall slam together bird-houses and bird-baths for
wing-loose wrens and hummers to live in, birds with yellow wing tips to blur and buzz soft all summer.

So I shall make little fool homes with doors, always open
doors for all and each to run away when they want to.
I shall come just like that even though now it is early and I
am not yet footloose,
Even though I am still looking for an undertaker with a raw,
wind-bitten face and a dance in his feet.
I make a date with you (put it down) for six o'clock in the
evening a thousand years from now.

All I can give you now is broken-face gargoyles.
All I can give you now is a double gorilla head with two fish
mouths and four eagle eyes hooked on a street wall, spouting water and looking two ways to the ends of the street
for the new people, the young strangers, coming, coming,
always coming.

It is early.
I shall yet be footloose.

FLASH CRIMSON

I shall cry God to give me a broken foot.

I shall ask for a scar and a slashed nose.

I shall take the last and the worst.

I shall be eaten by gray creepers in a bunkhouse where no
runners of the sun come and no dogs live.

And yet—of all "and yets" this is the bronze strongest—

I shall keep one thing better than all else; there is the blue steel of a great star of early evening in it; it lives longer than a broken foot or any scar.

The broken foot goes to a hole dug with a shovel or the bone of a nose may whiten on a hilltop—and yet—"and yet"—

There is one crimson pinch of ashes left after all; and none of the shifting winds that whip the grass and none of the pounding rains that beat the dust know how to touch or find the flash of this crimson.

I cry to God to give me a broken foot, a scar, or a lousy death.

I who have seen the flash of this crimson, I ask God for the last and worst.

EARLY LYNCHING

Two Christs were at Golgotha.
One took the vinegar, another looked on.
One was on the cross, another in the mob.
One had the nails in his hands, another the stiff fingers holding a hammer driving nails.
There were many more Christs at Golgotha, many more thief pals, many many more in the mob howling the Judean equivalent of "Kill Him! Kill Him!"
The Christ they killed, the Christ they didn't kill, those were the two at Golgotha.

Pity, pity, the bones of these broken ankles.
Pity, pity, the slimp of these broken wrists
The mother's arms are strong to the last.
She holds him and counts the heart drips.

The smell of the slums was on him,
Wrongs of the slums lit his eyes.
Songs of the slums wove in his voice
The haters of the slums hated his slum heart.

The leaves of a mountain tree,
Leaves with a spinning star shook in them,
Rocks with a song of water, water, over them,
Hawks with an eye for death any time, any time,
The smell and the sway of these were on his sleeves, were in
his nostrils, his words.

The slum man they killed, the mountain man lives on.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

Bright vocabularies are transient as rainbows.
Speech requires blood and air to make it.
Before the word comes off the end of the tongue,
While the diaphragms of flesh negotiate the word,
In the moment of doom when the word forms
It is born, alive, registering an imprint—
Afterward it is a mummy, a dry fact, done and gone,
The warning holds yet: Speak now or forever hold your peace.
Ecce homo had meanings: Behold the man! Look at him!
Dying he lives and speaks!

MOIST MOON PEOPLE

The moon is able to command the valley tonight.
The green mist shall go a-roaming, the white river shall go
a-roaming.
Yet the moon shall be commanding, the moon shall take a high
stand on the sky.

When the cats crept up the gullies,
And the goats fed at the rim a-laughing,
When the spiders swept their rooms in the burr oaks,
And the katydids first searched for this year's accordions,
And the crickets began a-looking for last year's concertinas—

I was there, I saw that hour, I know God had grand intentions
about it.
If not, why did the moon command the valley, the green mist
and white river go a-roaming, and the moon by itself take
so high a stand on the sky?

If God and I alone saw it, the show was worth putting on,
Yet I remember others were there, Amos and Priscilla, Axel
and Hulda, Hank and Jo, Big Charley and Little Morningstar.
They were all there; the clock ticks spoke with castanet clicks.

BUNDLES

I have thought of beaches, fields,
Tears, laughter.

I have thought of homes put up—
And blown away.

I have thought of meetings and for
Every meeting a good-by.

I have thought of stars going alone,
Orioles in pairs, sunsets in blundering
Wistful deaths.

I have wanted to let go and cross over
To a next star, a last star.

I have asked to be left a few tears
And some laughter.

UPSTREAM

The strong men keep coming on,
They go down shot, hanged, sick, broken.
They live on fighting, singing, lucky as plungers.
The strong mothers pulling them on . . .
The strong mothers pulling them from a dark sea, a great
prairie, a long mountain.
Call hallelujah, call amen, call deep thanks.
The strong men keep coming on.

FOR YOU

The peace of great doors be for you.
Wait at the knobs, at the panel oblongs;
Wait for the great hinges.

The peace of great churches be for you,
Where the players of lofty pipe-organs
Practice old lovely fragments, alone.

The peace of great books be for you,
Stains of pressed clover leaves on pages,
Bleach of the light of years held in leather.

The peace of great prairies be for you.
Listen among windplayers in cornfields,
The wind leaning over its oldest music.

The peace of great seas be for you.
Wait on a hook of land, a rock footing
For you, wait in the salt wash.

The peace of great mountains be for you,
The sleep and the eyesight of eagles,
Sheet mist shadows and the long look across.

The peace of great hearts be for you,
Valves of the blood of the sun,
Pumps of the strongest wants we cry.

The peace of great silhouettes be for you,
Shadow dancers alive in your blood now,
Alive and crying, "Let us out, let us out."

The peace of great changes be for you.
Whispers, oh beginners in the hills.
Tumble, oh cubs—tomorrow belongs to you.

The peace of great loves be for you.
Rain, soak these roots; wind, shatter the dry rot.
Bars of sunlight, grips of the earth; hug these.

The peace of great ghosts be for you,
Phantoms of night-gray eyes, ready to go
To the fog-star dumps, to the fire-white doors.

Yes, the peace of great phantoms be for you,
Phantom iron men, mothers of bronze,
Keepers of the lean clean breeds.

ADELAIDE CRAPSEY

Adelaide Crapsey, daughter of the famous minister, Algernon S. Crapsey, was born, September 9, 1878, in Rochester, New York, where she spent her childhood. She entered Vassar College in 1897, graduating with the class of 1901. Two years after graduation she began work as a teacher of History and Literature, in Kemper Hall, Kenosha, Wisconsin, where she had attended preparatory school. In 1905 she went abroad, studying archeology in Rome. After her return she tried to teach again, but her failing health compelled her to discontinue and though she became instructor in Poetics at Smith College in 1911, the burden was too great for her.

Prior to this time she had written little verse, her chief work being an analysis of English metrics, an investigation (which she never finished) of problems in verse structure. In 1913, after her breakdown, she began to write those brief lines which are so precise and poignant, most of her tiny volume being composed during the last few months of her life. She was particularly happy in her "Cinquains," a form which she originated. These five-line stanzas in the strictest possible pattern (the lines having, respectively, two, four, six, eight and two syllables) doubtless owe something to the Japanese *hokku*, but Adelaide Crapsey saturated them with her own fragile loveliness.

"Her death," writes Claude Bragdon, who was not only her friend but her first publisher, "was tragic. Full of the desire of life she was forced to go, leaving her work all unfinished. Her last year was spent in exile at Saranac. From her window she looked down on the graveyard—'Trudeau's Garden,' she called it, with grim-gay irony. Here, forbidden the work her metrical study entailed, these poems grew—flowers of a battlefield of the spirit." She died at Saranac Lake, New York, on October 8, 1914. Her small volume *Verse* appeared in 1915, and a part of the unfinished *Study in English Metrics* was posthumously published in 1918. A second edition of *Verse* with a few additional poems appeared in

1922. An unconscious Imagist, she gave fragility a firmness which saved the smallest of her designs from preciosity.

FIVE CINQUAINS

NOVEMBER NIGHT

Listen . . .
With faint dry sound,
Like steps of passing ghosts,
The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS [1]

"Why do
You thus devise
Evil against her?" "For that
She is beautiful, delicate.
Therefore."

TRIAD

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

NIAGARA

(*Seen on a night in November*)

How frail
Above the bulk
Of crashing water hangs,
Autumnal, evanescent, wan,
The moon.

THE WARNING

Just now,
Out of the strange
Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .
A white moth flew. Why am I grown
So cold?

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[1] Compare the poem on the same theme on page 380.

ON SEEING WEATHER-BEATEN TREES

Is it as plainly in our living shown,
By slant and twist, which way the wind hath blown?

VENDOR'S SONG

My songs to sell, good sir!
  I pray you buy.
Here's one will win a lady's tears,
  Here's one will make her gay,
Here's one will charm your true love true
  Forever and a day;
Good sir, I pray you buy!

Oh, no, he will not buy.

My songs to sell, sweet maid!
  I pray you buy.
This one will teach you Lilith's lore,
  And this what Helen knew,
And this will keep your gold hair gold,
  And this your blue eyes blue;
Sweet maid, I pray you buy!

Oh, no, she will not buy.

If I'd as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry my songs to sell.
I never would cry my songs to sell.

THE LONELY DEATH

In the cold I will rise, I will bathe
In waters of ice; myself
Will shiver and shrive myself,
Alone in the dawn, and anoint
Forehead and feet and hands;
I will shutter the windows from light,
I will place in their sockets the four

Tall candles and set them a-flame
In the gray of the dawn; and myself
Will lay myself straight in my bed,
And draw the sheet up under my chin.

SONG

I make my shroud, but no one knows—
So shimmering fine it is and fair,
With stitches set in even rows.
I make my shroud, but no one knows.

In door-way where the lilac blows,
Humming a little wandering air,
I make my shroud and no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair.

DIRGE

Never the nightingale,
  Oh, my dear,
Never again the lark
  Thou wilt hear;
Though dusk and the morning still
Tap at thy window-sill,
Though ever love call and call
Thou wilt not hear at all,
  My dear, my dear.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING

Grace Hazard Conkling was born in 1878 in New York City. After graduating from Smith College in 1899, she studied music at the University of Heidelberg (1902-3) and Paris (1903-4). Since 1914 she has been a teacher of English at Smith College, where she has done much to create an eager interest in poetry.

Mrs. Conkling's *Afternoons of April* (1915) and *Wilderness Songs* (1920) contain a graciousness that rarely grows cloying. Gentle colors and a gentler sadness are here; soft music, the whisper of flutes above a plaintive English horn, floats from her pages. But the poems are by no means monotonous. A fragrant whimsicality, a childlike freshness vivifies poems like "The Whole Duty of Berkshire Brooks," "Dilemma" and "Frost on a Window," which reminds one of the manner of her precocious daughter, Hilda (see page 819).

Ship's Log (1924) and *Witch and Other Poems* (1929) are more uneven collections. They have variety and alertness in their favor, but are handicapped by an overambitious program; the poems call for prodigal tropicalities, but Mrs. Conkling cannot splash color about as boldly as the poems promise. Nevertheless the echoes of Amy Lowell and Robert Frost do not drown the poet's clarinet-like, though sometimes uncertain, tone.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF BERKSHIRE BROOKS

To build the trout a crystal stair;
To comb the hillside's thick green hair;
To water jewel-weed and rushes;
To teach first notes to baby thrushes;
To flavor raspberry and apple
And make a whirling pool to dapple
With scattered gold of late October;
To urge wise laughter on the sober
And lend a dream to those who laugh;
To chant the beetle's epitaph;
To mirror the blue dragonfly,
Frail air-plane of a slender sky;
Over the stones to lull and leap
Herding the bubbles like white sheep;
The claims of worry to deny,
And whisper sorrow into sleep!

FROST ON A WINDOW

This forest looks the way
Nightingales sound.
Tall larches lilt and sway
Above the glittering ground:
The wild white cherry spray
Scatters radiance round.

The chuckle of the nightingale
Is like this elfin wood.
Even as his gleaming trills assail
The spirit's solitude,
These leaves of light, these branches frail
Are music's very mood.

The song of these fantastic trees,
The plumes of frost they wear,
Are for the poet's whim who sees
Through a deceptive air,
And has an ear for melodies
When never a sound is there.

JAMES BRANCH CABELL

James Branch Cabell was born in Richmond, Virginia, April 14, 1879. He taught French and Greek for two years at William and Mary College (1896-7), worked in the pressroom of the Richmond *Times* (1898), was on the staff of the New York *Herald* (1899-1901), and began contributing to the magazines in 1902, writing over sixty short stories as well as scattered essays, translations and papers on historical and biographical subjects.

Although Cabell likes to describe himself as a genealogist, he is the author of some of the most exquisite prose in contemporary literature. In books like *The Certain Hour* (1916), *The Cream of the Jest* (1917), *Jurgen* (1919), the poetry-crammed "comedy of appearances," *Figures of Earth* (1921), and indubitably in *The Silver Stallion* (1926) the composite Cabell hero emerges, triumphant in the midst of his defeats—the eternally disillusioned, eternally hopeful Jurgen-Charteris-Kennaston: a symbol of the human soul seeking some sort of finality, some assurance in a world of illimitable perplexities.

Though Cabell is best known as a novelist, his books are liberally dotted with original verses that do duty as chapter-headings, mottoes, tail-pieces, interpolated songs and epilogues. A complete volume of his verse, *From the Hidden Way* (1916), bore the subtitle "Being Seventy-Five Adaptations." It purported to be paraphrases from such forgotten troubadours as Allesandro de Medici, Antoine Riczi, Charles Garnier and half a dozen other obscure Parnassians. Cabell "quoted" the first lines of each of their poems in the original Latin, French or Provençal. Even after the hoax was exposed, it was difficult for most readers to believe that the entire collection—names, references, first lines in the "original" and all—was the creation of Cabell, the masquerader. In *From the Hidden Way*, the romancer added another story to that gem-studded ivory tower in which Cabell lives and escapes the modern world. Whether he echoes the medieval ballata or the more modern rondeau, roundel and sonnet, whether he employs prose or verse as his medium, his is an artifice firmly erected upon art.

Cabellian Harmonics (1928) by Warren A. McNeill is a minute study of the symphonic plan of Cabell's prose-poetry, its intricate hexameters, recurrent rhythms and contrapuntal effects.

SEA-SCAPES

I lie and dream in the soft warm sand; and the thunder and surge and the baffled roar
Of the sea's relentless and vain endeavors are a pleasant lullaby, here on shore.

Since a little hillock screens yonder ageless, tenacious battlings (which shatter, and pass
In foam and spume), I appraise, half-nodding, much sand and sky and gaunt nodding grass.

And I am content to lie and dream; and I am too drowsy to rise and see
If it be worth breasting—that ocean yonder, which a little hillock hides from me.

ONE END OF LOVE

"It is long since we met," she said.
I answered, "Yes."

She is not fair,
But very old now, and no gold
Gleams in that scant gray withered hair
Where once much gold was: and, I think,
Not easily might one bring tears
Into her eyes, which have become
Like dusty glass.

" 'Tis thirty years,"
I said. "And then the war came on
Apace, and our young King had need
Of men to serve him oversea
Against the heathen. For their greed,
Puffed up at Tunis, troubles him—"
She said: "This week my son is gone
To him at Paris with his men."
And then: "You never married, John?"

I answered, "No." And so we sate
Musing a while.

Then with his guests
Came Robert; and his thin voice broke
Upon my dream, with the old jests,
No food for laughter now: and swore
We must be friends now that our feud
Was overpast.

"We are grown old—
Eh, John?" he said. "And, by the Rood!
'Tis time we were at peace with God
Who are not long for this world."

"Yea,"
I answered; "we are old." And then,
Remembering that April day
At Calais, and that hawthorn field
Wherein we fought long since, I said:
"We are friends now."

And she sate by,
Scarce heeding. Thus the evening sped.

And we ride homeward now, and I
Ride moodily; my palfrey jogs
Along a rock-strewn way the moon
Lights up for us; yonder the bogs
Are curdled with thin ice; the trees
Are naked; from the barren wold
The wind comes like a blade aslant
Across a world grown very old.

FLOTSAM

We did not share the same inheritance,—
I and this woman, five years older than I,
Yet daughter of a later century,—
Who is therefore only wearied by that dance
Which has set my blood a-leaping.

It is queer
To note how kind her face grows, listening
To my wild talk, and plainly pitying
My callow youth, and seeing in me a dear
Amusing boy,—yet somehow old to be
Still reading *Alice through the Looking-glass*
And *Water Babies* . . .

With light talk we pass.

And I that have lived long in Arcady—
I that have kept so many a foolish tryst,
And written driveling rhymes—feel stirring in me
Droll pity for this woman who pities me,
And whose weak mouth so many men have kissed.

VACHEL LINDSAY

(Nicholas) Vachel Lindsay was born in Springfield, Illinois, November 10, 1879. His home for many years was next door to the executive mansion of the State of Illinois; from the window where Lindsay did most of his writing, he saw governors come and go, including the martyred John P. Altgeld, whom he has celebrated in one of his finest poems. He graduated from the Springfield High School, attended Hiram College (1897-1900), studied at the Art Institute at Chicago (1900-3) and at the New York School of Art (1904). After two years of lecturing and settlement work, he took the first of his long tramps, walking through Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas, preaching "the gospel of beauty," and formulating his unique plans for a communal art. (See Preface.) During the following five years, Lindsay made several of these trips, traveling as a combination missionary and minstrel. Like a true revivalist, he attempted to wake in the people he met a response to beauty, distributing a little pamphlet entitled "Rhymes to be Traded for Bread."

Lindsay began to create more poetry to reach the public—all of his verse being written in his rôle of apostle. He was, primarily, a rhyming John the Baptist singing to convert the heathen, to stimulate and encourage the half-hearted dreams that hide and are smothered in sordid villages and townships. But the great audiences he was endeavoring to reach did not hear him, even though his collection *General Booth Enters Into Heaven* (1913) struck many a loud and racy note.

Lindsay broadened his effects, developed the chant, and, the following year, published his *The Congo and Other Poems* (1914), an infectious blend of rhyme, religion and rag-time. In the title poem and, in a lesser degree, the three companion chants, Lindsay struck his most powerful—and most popular—vein. It gave people (particularly when intoned aloud) that primitive joy in syncopated sound that is at the very base of song. In these experiments in breaking down the barriers between poetry and music, Lindsay (obviously infected by the echolalia of Poe's "Bells") tried to create what he called a "Higher Vaudeville" imagination, carrying the form back to the old Greek precedent where every line was half-spoken, half-sung.

Lindsay's innovation succeeded at once. The novelty, the speed, the clatter, forced the attention of people who had never paid the slightest heed to the poet's quieter verses. Men heard the *sounds* of hurtling America in these lines even when they were deaf to its spirit. They failed to see that, beneath the noise of "The Kallyope Yell" and "The Santa Fé Trail," Lindsay was partly an admirer, partly an ironical critic of the shrieking energy of these states. By his effort to win the enemy over, Lindsay had persuaded the proverbially tired business man to listen at last. But, in overstressing the vaudeville features, there arose the danger of Lindsay the poet being lost in Lindsay the entertainer. The sympathetic celebration of Negro spirits and psychology (seen at their best in "The Congo," "John Brown" and "Simon Legree") degenerated into the crude buffooneries of "The Daniel Jazz" and "The Blacksmith's Serenade." The three bracketed poems, and a few others, are certain of a place in the history of American poetry.

Lindsay's earnestness, keyed up by an exuberant fancy, saved him. *The Chinese Nightingale* (1917) begins with one of the most whimsical rhymes Lindsay has ever devised. This title-poem is his finest piece of sheer texture. And if the subsequent *The Golden Whales of California* (1920) is less distinctive, it is principally because the author has written too much and too speedily to be self-critical. It is his peculiar appraisal of loveliness, the rollicking high spirits joined to a stubborn evangelism, that makes Lindsay so representative a product of his environment.

Collected Poems (1923) is a complete and almost cruel exhibit of Lindsay's best and worst. That Lindsay had lost whatever faculty of self-appraisal he may have possessed is evidenced by page after page of crudities; verses are propelled by nothing more than physical energy whipping up a trivial idea. What mars so much of this writing is Lindsay's attempt to give every wisp of fantasy a cosmic or at least a national significance. Thus that intoxicating chant "The Ghosts of the Buffaloes" appears in the later edition with an unfortunate appendage, an irrelevant hortatory appeal beginning, "Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all!" But, in spite of the fact that the poet suffers from a complex of undiscriminating patriotism, a curious hero-worship which makes him link Woodrow Wilson with Socrates, his very catholicity is representative of a great part of his country. *Going to the Sun* (1924), *Going to the Stars* (1925) and *The Candle in the Cabin* (1926), following each other in too rapid succession, betray Lindsay's uncritical loquacity. These volumes are distinguished chiefly by the whimsical drawings which the poet has scattered among the feeble verses. His subsequent prose is far better. *The Litany of Washington Street* (1929), described as "a kind of Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday, Whitman's birthday, Jefferson's birthday book," is a set of Fourth of July orations on an idealized Main Street stretching from Connecticut to Calcutta.

Much of Lindsay will die; he will not live as either a prophet or a politician. But the vitality which impels the best of his galloping meters will persist; his innocent wildness of imagination, outlasting his naïve programs, will charm even those to whom his declamations are no longer a novelty. His gospel is no less original for being preached through a saxophone.

Besides his original poetry, Lindsay has embodied his experiences and meditations on the road in two prose volumes, *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (1916) and *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* (1914), as well as an enthusiastic study of the "silent drama," *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915). A curious document, half rhapsody, half visionary novel, entitled *The Golden Book of Springfield,* appeared in 1920. He died December 4, 1931.

THE CONGO

(*A Study of the Negro Race*)

I. THEIR BASIC SAVAGERY

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table, *A deep rolling bass.*
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a
broom,
Hard as they were able,
Boom, boom, BOOM,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a
broom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM.

More deliberate. Solemnly chanted.

THEN I had religion, THEN I had a vision.
I could not turn from their revel in derision.
THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
CUTTING THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.

Then along that riverbank
A thousand miles
Tattooed cannibals danced in files;
Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song

A rapidly piling climax of speed and racket.

And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong.
And "BLOOD" screamed the whistles and the fifes of the warriors,
"BLOOD" screamed the skull-faced, lean witch-doctors,
"Whirl ye the deadly voo-doo rattle,
Harry the uplands,
Steal all the cattle,
Rattle-rattle, rattle-rattle,
Bing!
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,"

With a philosophic pause.

A roaring, epic, rag-time tune
From the mouth of the Congo
To the Mountains of the Moon.

Shrilly and with a heavily accented meter.

Death is an Elephant,
Torch-eyed and horrible,
Foam-flanked and terrible.
BOOM, steal the pygmies,
BOOM, kill the Arabs,
BOOM, kill the white men,

Like the wind in the chimney.

Hoo, Hoo, Hoo.
Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost
Burning in Hell for his hand-maimed host.
Hear how the demons chuckle and yell.
Cutting his hands off, down in Hell.
Listen to the creepy proclamation,
Blown through the lairs of the forest-nation,
Blown past the white-ants' hill of clay,
Blown past the marsh where the butterflies play:—
"Be careful what you do,

All the o sounds, very golden. Heavy accents very heavy. Light accents very light. Last line whispered.

Or Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all of the other
Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you."

II. Their Irrepressible High Spirits

Rather shrill and high.

Wild crap-shooters with a whoop and a call
Danced the juba in their gambling-hall
And laughed fit to kill, and shook the town,
And guyed the policemen and laughed them down
With a boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM. . . .

Read exactly as in first section.

THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
CUTTING THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.

Lay emphasis on the delicate ideas. Keep as light-footed as possible.

A negro fairyland swung into view,
A minstrel river
Where dreams come true.
The ebony palace soared on high
Through the blossoming trees to the evening sky,
The inlaid porches and casements shone
With gold and ivory and elephant-bone.
And the black crowd laughed till their sides were sore
At the baboon butler in the agate door,
And the well-known tunes of the parrot band
That trilled on the bushes of that magic-land.

With pomposity.

A troupe of skull-faced witch-men came
Through the agate doorway in suits of flame,
Yes, long-tailed coats with a gold-leaf crust
And hats that were covered with diamond-dust.
And the crowd in the court gave a whoop and a call
And danced the juba from wall to wall.

With a great deliberation and ghostliness.

But the witch-men suddenly stilled the throng
With a stern cold glare, and a stern old song:—
"Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you." . . .

With overwhelming assurance, good cheer, and pomp.

Just then from the doorway, as fat as shotes,
Came the cake-walk princes in their long red coats,
Shoes with a patent leather shine,
And tall silk hats that were red as wine.

With growing speed and sharply marked dance-rhythm.

And they pranced with their butterfly partners there,
Coal-black maidens with pearls in their hair,
Knee-skirts trimmed with the jessamine sweet,
And bells on their ankles and little black feet.
And the couples railed at the chant and the frown
Of the witch-men lean, and laughed them down.
(O rare was the revel, and well worth while
That made those glowering witch-men smile).

The cake-walk royalty then began
To walk for a cake that was tall as a man
To the tune of "Boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,"

With a touch of negro dialect, and as rapidly as possible toward the end.

While the witch-men laughed, with a sinister air,
And sang with the scalawags prancing there:—
"Walk with care, walk with care,
Or Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all of the other
Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you.
Beware, beware, walk with care,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom.
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay,
BOOM."

Slow philosophic calm.

O rare was the revel, and well worth while
That made those glowering witch-men smile.

III. The Hope of their Religion

Heavy bass. With a literal imitation of camp-meeting racket, and trance.

A good old negro in the slums of the town
Preached at a sister for her velvet gown.
Howled at a brother for his low-down ways,
His prowling, guzzling, sneak-thief days.
Beat on the Bible till he wore it out,
Starting the jubilee revival shout.
And some had visions, as they stood on chairs,
And sang of Jacob, and the golden stairs.
And they all repented, a thousand strong,
From their stupor and savagery and sin and wrong
And slammed their hymn-books till they shook the room
With "Glory, glory, glory,"
And "Boom, boom, BOOM."

Exactly as in the first section.

THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
CUTTING THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.
And the gray sky opened like a new-rent veil
And showed the apostles with their coats of mail.
In bright white steel they were seated round
And their fire-eyes watched where the Congo wound.
And the twelve apostles, from their thrones on high,
Thrilled all the forest with their heavenly cry:—

Sung to the tune of "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."

"Mumbo-Jumbo will die in the jungle;
Never again will he hoo-doo you,
Never again will he hoo-doo you."

With growing deliberation and joy.

Then along that river, a thousand miles,
The vine-snared trees fell down in files.
Pioneer angels cleared the way
For a Congo paradise, for babes at play,
For sacred capitals, for temples clean.
Gone were the skull-faced witch-men lean.

There, where the wild ghost-gods had wailed
A million boats of the angels sailed
With oars of silver, and prows of blue
And silken pennants that the sun shone through.
In a rather high key—as delicately as possible.
'Twas a land transfigured, 'twas a new creation.
Oh, a singing wind swept the negro nation;
And on through the backwoods clearing flew:—
"Mumbo-Jumbo is dead in the jungle.
Never again will he hoo-doo you.
Never again will he hoo-doo you."
To the tune of "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."

Redeemed were the forests, the beasts and the men,
And only the vulture dared again
By the far, lone mountains of the moon
To cry, in the silence, the Congo tune:—
"Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
Mumbo . . . Jumbo . . . will . . . hoo-doo . . . you."
Dying off into a penetrating, terrified whisper.

TO A GOLDEN-HAIRED GIRL IN A LOUISIANA TOWN

You are a sunrise,
If a star should rise instead of the sun.
You are a moonrise,
If a star should come in the place of the moon.
You are the Spring,
If a face should bloom instead of an apple-bough.
You are my love,
If your heart is as kind
As your young eyes now.

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS INTO HEAVEN

(To be sung to the tune of "The Blood of the Lamb" with indicated instruments)

I

(*Bass drum beaten loudly.*)
Booth led boldly with his big bass drum—
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

The Saints smiled gravely and they said: "He's come."
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail:—
Vermin-eaten saints with moldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of Death—
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

(*Banjos.*)
Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)
Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.
Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang,
Tranced, fanatical they shrieked and sang:—
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
Hallelujah! It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free.
Loons with trumpets blowed a blare, blare, blare
On, on upward thro' the golden air!
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

II

(*Bass drum slower and softer.*)
Booth died blind and still by faith he trod,
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.
Booth led boldly, and he looked the chief,
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,
Beard a-flying, air of high command
Unabated in that holy land.

(*Sweet flute music.*)
Jesus came from out the court-house door,
Stretched his hands above the passing poor.
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
Round and round the mighty court-house square.
Yet in an instant all that blear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.

(Bass drum louder.)
Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl!
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

(Grand chorus of all instruments. Tambourines to the foreground.)
The hosts were sandaled, and their wings were fire!
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir.
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
Oh, shout Salvation! It was good to see
Kings and Princes by the Lamb set free.
The banjos rattled and the tambourines
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens.

(Reverently sung, no instruments.)
And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master thro' the flag-filled air.
Christ came gently with a robe and crown
For Booth the soldier, while the throng knelt down.
He saw King Jesus. They were face to face,
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

THE EAGLE THAT IS FORGOTTEN

(John P. Altgeld. Born December 30, 1847;
died March 12, 1902)

Sleep softly . . . eagle forgotten . . . under the stone,
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
"We have buried him now," thought your foes, and in secret rejoiced.
They made a brave show of their mourning, their hatred unvoiced,
They had snarled at you, barked at you, foamed at you, day after day,
Now you were ended. They praised you, . . . and laid you away.

The others that mourned you in silence and terror and truth,
The widow bereft of her pittance, the boy without youth,
The mocked and the scorned and the wounded, the lame and the poor
That should have remembered forever, . . . remember no more.

Where are those lovers of yours, on what name do they call
The lost, that in armies wept over your funeral pall?
They call on the names of a hundred high-valiant ones,
A hundred white eagles have risen, the sons of your sons,
The zeal in their wings is a zeal that your dreaming began,
The valor that wore out your soul in the service of man.

Sleep softly, . . . eagle forgotten, . . . under the stone,
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
Sleep on, O brave hearted, O wise man, that kindled the flame—
To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name,
To live in mankind, far, far more . . . than to live in a name.

THE GHOSTS OF THE BUFFALOES

Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,
The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,
The floor was a-tremble, the door was a-jar,
White fires, crimson fires, shone from afar.
I rushed to the dooryard. The city was gone.
My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.
It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,
Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream . . .

Then . . .
Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row,
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.
They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,
And eagles gigantic, agèd and sere,
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."
They lifted the knife, the bow and the spear,
They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,
The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."

The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
"A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes
Came the rank and the file, with catamount cries,
Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,
Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,
Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,
Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,
Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,
Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,
Power and glory that sleep in the grass
While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.
They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,
They rode out in infinite lines to the west,
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by
Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,
The wind cried and cried—
Muttered of massacres long past,
Buffaloes in shambles vast . . .
An owl said, "Hark, what is a-wing?"
I heard a cricket caroling,
I heard a cricket caroling,
I heard a cricket caroling.

Then . . .
Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.
The lords of the prairie came galloping by.
And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la.
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.
With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,
Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs,
Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,
Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,
Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,
Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.

Life sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks
With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,
A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,
And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,
Rattled and thumped in a listless way,
And now the wind in the chimney sang,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
Seemed to say:—
"Dream, boy, dream,
If you anywise can.
To dream is the work
Of beast or man.
Life is the west-going dream-storm's breath,
Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,
The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows
With their golden hair mussed over their eyes."
The locust played on his musical wing,
Sang to his mate of love's delight.
I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret.
I heard a cricket caroling,
I heard a cricket caroling,
I heard a cricket say: "Good-night, good-night,
Good-night, good-night, . . . good-night."

THE TRAVELER

The moon's a devil jester
Who makes himself too free.
The rascal is not always
Where he appears to be.
Sometimes he is in my heart—
Sometimes he is in the sea;
Then tides are in my heart,
And tides are in the sea.

O traveler, abiding not
Where he pretends to be!

A NEGRO SERMON: SIMON LEGREE

Legree's big house was white and green.
His cotton-fields were the best to be seen.
He had strong horses and opulent cattle,
And bloodhounds bold, with chains that would rattle.
His garret was full of curious things:
Books of magic, bags of gold,
And rabbits' feet on long twine strings,
But he went down to the Devil.

Legree, he sported a brass-buttoned coat,
A snake-skin necktie, a blood-red shirt.
Legree, he had a beard like a goat,
And a thick hairy neck, and eyes like dirt.
His puffed-out cheeks were fish-belly white,
He had great long teeth, and an appetite.
He ate raw meat, 'most every meal,
And rolled his eyes till the cat would squeal.
His fist was an enormous size
To mash poor niggers that told him lies:
He was surely a witch-man in disguise.
But he went down to the Devil.

He wore hip-boots, and would wade all day
To capture his slaves that had fled away.

But he went down to the Devil.
He beat poor Uncle Tom to death
Who prayed for Legree with his last breath.
Then Uncle Tom to Eva flew,
To the high sanctoriums bright and new;
And Simon Legree stared up beneath,
And cracked his heels, and ground his teeth:
And went down to the Devil.
He crossed the yard in the storm and gloom;
He went into his grand front room.
He said, "I killed him, and I don't care."
He kicked a hound, he gave a swear;
He tightened his belt, he took a lamp,
Went down cellar to the webs and damp.
There in the middle of the moldy floor
He heaved up a slab; he found a door—
And went down to the Devil.

His lamp blew out, but his eyes burned bright.
Simon Legree stepped down all night—
Down, down to the Devil.
Simon Legree he reached the place,
He saw one half of the human race,
He saw the Devil on a wide green throne,
Gnawing the meat from a big ham-bone,
And he said to Mister Devil:
  "I see that you have much to eat—
  A red ham-bone is surely sweet.
  I see that you have lion's feet;
  I see your frame is fat and fine,
  I see you drink your poison wine—
  Blood and burning turpentine."

And the Devil said to Simon Legree:
  "I like your style, so wicked and free.
  Come sit and share my throne with me,
  And let us bark and revel."
And there they sit and gnash their teeth,
And each one wears a hop-vine wreath.
They are matching pennies and shooting craps,
They are playing poker and taking naps.

And old Legree is fat and fine:
He eats the fire, he drinks the wine—
Blood and burning turpentine—
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil.

JOHN BROWN

(To be sung by a leader and chorus, the leader singing the body of the poem, while the chorus interrupts with the question)

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw the ark of Noah—
It was made of pitch and pine.
I saw old Father Noah
Asleep beneath his vine.
I saw Shem, Ham and Japhet
Standing in a line.
I saw the tower of Babel
In the gorgeous sunrise shine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw abominations
And Gadarene swine.
I saw the sinful Canaanites
Upon the shewbread dine,
And spoil the temple vessels
And drink the temple wine.
I saw Lot's wife, a pillar of salt
Standing in the brine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Cedars on Mount Lebanon,
Gold in Ophir's mine.

And a wicked generation
Seeking for a sign.
And Baal's howling worshipers
Their god with leaves entwine.
And . . .
I saw the war-horse ramping
And shake his forelock fine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Old John Brown.
Old John Brown.
I saw his gracious wife
Dressed in a homespun gown.
I saw his seven sons
Before his feet bow down.
And he marched with his seven sons,
His wagons and goods and guns,
To his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw the harp and psalt'ry
Played for Old John Brown.
I heard the ram's horn blow,
Blow for Old John Brown.
I saw the Bulls of Bashan—
They cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the big Behemoth—
He cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the big Leviathan—
He cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the Angel Gabriel
Great power to him assign.
I saw him fight the Canaanites
And set God's Israel free.
I saw him when the war was done
In his rustic chair recline—

By his campfire by the sea
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Old John Brown.
Old John Brown.
And there he sits
To judge the world.
His hunting-dogs
At his feet are curled.
His eyes half-closed,
But John Brown sees
The ends of the earth,
The Day of Doom.
And his shot-gun lies
Across his knees—
Old John Brown,
Old John Brown.

THE DOVE OF NEW SNOW

I give you a house of snow,
I give you the flag of the wind above it,
I give you snow-bushes
In a long row,
I give you a snow-dove,
And ask you
To love it.

The snow-dove flies in
At the snow-house window,
He is a ghost
And he casts no shadow.
His cry is the cry of love
From the meadow,
The meadow of snow where we walked in a glow,
The glittering, angelic meadow.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN WALKS AT MIDNIGHT[1]

(In Springfield, Illinois)

It is portentous, and a thing of state
That here at midnight, in our little town
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,
Near the old court-house pacing up and down,

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards
He lingers where his children used to play,
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.
He is among us:—as in times before!
And we who toss and lie awake for long,
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks of men and kings.
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?
Too many peasants fight, they know not why;
Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
Shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free:
A league of sober folk, the workers' earth,
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp and Sea.

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[1] See pages 105, 163, 189, 334, 349, 354, 467.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,
That all his hours of travail here for men
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

THE FLOWER-FED BUFFALOES

The flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
In the days of long ago,
Ranged where the locomotives sing
And the prairie flowers lie low;
The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass
Is swept away by wheat,
Wheels and wheels and wheels spin by
In the spring that still is sweet.
But the flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
Left us long ago.
They gore no more, they bellow no more,
They trundle around the hills no more:—
With the Blackfeet lying low,
With the Pawnees lying low.

WHEN LINCOLN CAME TO SPRINGFIELD[1]

When Lincoln came to Springfield,
  In the ancient days,
Queer were the streets and sketchy,
  And he was in a maze.

Leaving log cabins behind him.
  For the mud streets of this place,
Sorrow for Anne Rutledge
  Burned in his face.

He threw his muddy saddle bags
  On Joshua Speed's floor,
He took off his old hat,
  He looked around the store.

[1] See pages 105, 163, 189, 333, 349, 354, 467.

He shook his long hair
  On his bison-head,
He sat down on the counter,
  "Speed, I've moved," he said.

THE VOYAGE

What is my mast? A pen.
What are my sails? Ten crescent moons.
What is my sea? A bottle of ink.
Where do I go? To heaven again.
What do I eat? The amaranth flower,
While the winds through the jungles think old tunes.
I eat that flower with ivory spoons
While the winds through the jungles play old tunes;
The songs the angels used to sing
When heaven was not old autumn, but spring—
The bold, old songs of heaven and spring.

THE CHINESE NIGHTINGALE

(*A Song in Chinese Tapestries*)

"How, how," he said. "Friend Chang," I said,
"San Francisco sleeps as the dead—
Ended license, lust and play:
Why do you iron the night away?
Your big clock speaks with a deadly sound,
With a tick and a wail till dawn comes round,
While the monster shadows glower and creep,
What can be better for man than sleep?"

"I will tell you a secret," Chang replied;
"My breast with vision is satisfied,
And I see green trees and fluttering wings,
And my deathless bird from Shanghai sings."
Then he lit five firecrackers in a pan,
"Pop, pot," said the firecrackers, "cra-cra-crack."
He lit a joss stick long and black.
Then the proud gray joss in the corner stirred;

On his wrist appeared a gray small bird,
And this was the song of the gray small bird:
"Where is the princess, loved forever,
Who made Chang first of the kings of men?"

And the joss in the corner stirred again;
And the carved dog, curled in his arms, awoke,
Barked forth a smoke-cloud that whirled and broke.
It piled in a maze round the ironing-place,
And there on the snowy table wide
Stood a Chinese lady of high degree,
With a scornful, witching, tea-rose face. . . .
Yet she put away all form and pride,
And laid her glimmering veil aside
With a childlike smile for Chang and me.

The walls fell back, night was aflower,
The table gleamed in a moonlit bower,
While Chang, with a countenance carved of stone,
Ironed and ironed, all alone.
And thus she sang to the busy man Chang:
"Have you forgotten . . .
Deep in the ages, long, long ago,
I was your sweetheart, there on the sand—
Storm-worn beach of the Chinese land?
We sold our grain in the peacock town—
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown—
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown. . . .
When all the world was drinking blood
From the skulls of men and bulls
And all the world had swords and clubs of stone,
We drank our tea in China beneath the sacred spice-trees,
And heard the curled waves of the harbor moan.
And this gray bird, in Love's first spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his caroling.
Do you remember, ages after,
At last the world we were born to own?
You were the heir of the yellow throne—
The world was the field of the Chinese man
And we were the pride of the Sons of Han?

We copied deep books and we carved in jade,
And wove blue silks in the mulberry shade. . . ."

"I remember, I remember
That Spring came on forever,
That Spring came on forever,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

My heart was filled with marvel and dream,
Though I saw the western street-lamps gleam,
Though dawn was bringing the western day,
Though Chang was a laundryman ironing away, . . .
Mingled there with the streets and alleys,
The railroad-yard and the clock-tower bright,
Demon clouds crossed ancient valleys;
Across wide lotus-ponds of light
I marked a giant firefly's flight.

And the lady, rosy-red,
Flourished her fan, her shimmering fan,
Stretched her hand toward Chang, and said:
"Do you remember,
Ages after,
Our palace of heart-red stone?
Do you remember
The little doll-faced children
With their lanterns full of moon-fire,
That came from all the empire
Honoring the throne?—
The loveliest fête and carnival
Our world had ever known?
The sages sat about us
With their heads bowed in their beards,
With proper meditation on the sight.
Confucius was not born;
We lived in those great days
Confucius later said were lived aright. . . .
And this gray bird, on that day of Spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his caroling.
Late at night his tune was spent.

Peasants,
Sages,
Children,
Homeward went,
And then the bronze bird sang for you and me.
We walked alone. Our hearts were high and free.
I had a silvery name, I had a silvery name,
I had a silvery name—do you remember
The name you cried beside the tumbling sea?"

Chang turned not to the lady slim—
He bent to his work, ironing away;
But she was arch, and knowing and glowing,
For the bird on his shoulder spoke for him.

"Darling . . . darling . . . darling . . . darling . . ."
Said the Chinese nightingale.

The great gray joss on the rustic shelf,
Rakish and shrewd, with his collar awry,
Sang impolitely, as though by himself,
Drowning with his bellowing the nightingale's cry:
"Back through a hundred, hundred years
Hear the waves as they climb the piers,
Hear the howl of the silver seas,
Hear the thunder.
Hear the gongs of holy China
How the waves and tunes combine
In a rhythmic clashing wonder,
Incantation old and fine:
  'Dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons,
  Red firecrackers, and green firecrackers
  And dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons.' "

Then the lady, rosy-red,
Turned to her lover Chang and said:
"Dare you forget that turquoise dawn
When we stood in our mist-hung velvet lawn,
And worked a spell this great joss taught
Till a God of the Dragons was charmed and caught?
From the flag high over our palace home
He flew to our feet in rainbow-foam—

A king of beauty and tempest and thunder
Panting to tear our sorrows asunder.
A dragon of fair adventure and wonder.
We mounted the back of that royal slave
With thoughts of desire that were noble and grave.
We swam down the shore to the dragon-mountains,
We whirled to the peaks and the fiery fountains.
To our secret ivory house we were borne.
We looked down the wonderful wind-filled regions
Where the dragons darted in glimmering legions.
Right by my breast the nightingale sang;
The old rhymes rang in the sunlit mist
That we this hour regain—
Song-fire for the brain.
When my hands and my hair and my feet you kissed,
When you cried for your heart's new pain,
What was my name in the dragon-mist,
In the rings of the rainbowed rain?"

"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Sang the Chinese nightingale,
"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

And now the joss broke in with his song:
"Dying ember, bird of Chang,
Soul of Chang, do you remember?—
Ere you returned to the shining harbor
There were pirates by ten thousand
Descended on the town
In vessels mountain-high and red and brown,
Moon-ships that climbed the storms and cut the skies.
On their prows were painted terrible bright eyes.
But I was then a wizard and a scholar and a priest;
I stood upon the sand;
With lifted hand I looked upon them
And sunk their vessels with my wizard eyes,
And the stately lacquer-gate made safe again.
Deep, deep below the bay, the seaweed and the spray,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies."

Then this did the noble lady say:
"Bird, do you dream of our home-coming day
When you flew like a courier on before
From the dragon-peak to our palace-door,
And we drove the steed in your singing path—
The ramping dragon of laughter and wrath:
And found our city all aglow,
And knighted this joss that decked it so?
There were golden fishes in the purple river
And silver fishes and rainbow fishes.
There were golden junks in the laughing river,
And silver junks and rainbow junks:
There were golden lilies by the bay and river,
And silver lilies and tiger-lilies,
And tinkling wind-bells in the gardens of the town
By the black-lacquer gate
Where walked in state
The kind king Chang
And his sweetheart mate. . . .
With his flag-born dragon
And his crown of pearl . . . and . . . jade,
And his nightingale reigning in the mulberry shade,
And sailors and soldiers on the sea-sands brown,
And priests who bowed them down to your song—
By the city called Han, the peacock town,
By the city called Han, the nightingale town,
The nightingale town."

Then sang the bird, so strangely gay,
Fluttering, fluttering, ghostly and gray,
A vague, unraveling, final tune,
Like a long unwinding silk cocoon;
Sang as though for the soul of him
Who ironed away in that bower dim:—
  "I have forgotten
  Your dragons great,
  Merry and mad and friendly and bold.
Dim is your proud lost palace-gate.
I vaguely know
There were heroes of old,
Troubles more than the heart could hold,

There were wolves in the woods
Yet lambs in the fold,
Nests in the top of the almond tree. . . .
The evergreen tree . . . and the mulberry tree.
Life and hurry and joy forgotten,
Years and years I but half-remember . . .
Man is a torch, then ashes soon,
May and June, then dead December,
Dead December, then again June.
Who shall end my dream's confusion?
Life is a loom, leaving illusion. . . .
I remember, I remember
There were ghostly veils and laces. . . .
In the shadowy bowery places. . . .
With lovers' ardent faces
Bending to one another,
Speaking each his part.
They infinitely echo
In the red cave of my heart.
'Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart,'
They said to one another.
They spoke, I think, of perils past.
They spoke, I think, of peace at last.
One thing I remember;
Spring came on forever,
Spring came on forever,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

MELVILLE CANE

Melville Cane was born April 15, 1879, at Plattsburg, New York. He was educated at Columbia Grammar School, received his A.B. at Columbia in 1900, LL.B. in 1903. At Columbia he was editor-in-chief of the Literary Monthly, writing the lyrics of the Varsity operetta, the music of which was supplied by John Erskine. While still in college he contributed light verse to *Puck*, *Judge* and the more sedate *Century* and was a reporter on the *New York Evening Post*. Upon graduation he engaged in the practice of law, specializing in the law of copyright and the theater.

After an interval of twenty years, he resumed writing and turned to a wholly unforeseen expression. *January Garden* (1926) is the antithesis of the light verse of Cane's youth; it is sensitive and unequivocally serious. Most of the volume is in a free verse whose contours are shaped by introspection. A somber cast may have accounted for the sparse enthusiasm with which it was received, but it is more difficult to account for failure to recognize the delicacy of the pictorial effects.

Cane's *Behind Dark Spaces* (1930) is less impressionistic, but what it loses in suggestion it gains in sharpness. Mixing "pure" and "suspended" rhyme, his tone-color has grown richer; concentrating on instead of writing around the object, he has developed power without resorting to force.

SNOW TOWARD EVENING

Suddenly the sky turned gray,
The day,
Which had been bitter and chill,
Grew soft and still.
Quietly
From some invisible blossoming tree
Millions of petals cool and white
Drifted and blew,
Lifted and flew,
Fell with the falling night.

TREE IN DECEMBER

Frost has sealed
The still December field.
Over fern and furrow,
Over the quickening
Within each meadowy acre,
Frost, invisibly thorough,
Spreads its thickening
Stiffening lacquer.

Above the field, beneath a sky
Heavy with snow stirring to fly,
A tree stands alone,
Bare of fruit, leaves gone,
Bleak as stone.

Once, on a similar glazed
Field, on a similar tree,
Dead as the eye could see,
The first man, dazed
In the first December, grimly gazed,
Never having seen
The miracle of recurring green,
The shining spectacle of rebirth
Rising out of frozen earth.

Snow fell and all about
Covered earth, and him with doubt.
More chill grew the air
And his mute despair.

Leaves that April had uncurled
Now were blown dust in the world,
Apples mellowing sweet and sound
Now were icy rot in the ground;
Roses August sunned in bloom
Now were less than lost perfume.

Had he seen the final hour
Of fruit and leaf and flower?
Had the last bird taken wing,
Nevermore to sing?
Never to fly in the light of another spring?

The man trembled with cold, with dread,
Thinking of all things dead
And his own earthen bed.

Trembling, he grew aware
Of a new quiet in the air;
Snow had ceased;
A ray came faintly through;
The wavering slit of blue
Vaguely increased.

Trembling, the first man gazed
At the glazed
And glittering tree,
Dead as the eye could see.

Whence came the sight
To read the sign aright?
The hint,—
The glad intimation, flashing:
"Wintry rains
Are blood in the veins;
Under snows and binding sleets
Locked roots live, a heart still beats"?

From what impalpable breath
Issued the faith,
The inner cry: "This is not death"?

FRANKLIN P. ADAMS

Franklin Pierce Adams, better known to the readers of his column as F. P. A., was born in Chicago, Illinois, November 15, 1881. He attended the University of Michigan (1899-1900) and, after a brief career as insurance agent, plunged into journalism. Adams had already been an ardent contributor to B. L. T.'s "A Line o' Type or Two" and, in 1903, he began conducting a column of his own on the Chicago *Journal.* Late in 1904, he came to New York, running his section on *The Evening Mail* until 1914, when he started "The Conning Tower" for the New York *Tribune,* transferring it some years later to the New York *World.*

Adams is the author of several volumes of a light verse that is unusually skillful. *Tobogganing on Parnassus* (1909), *In Other Words* (1912), *By and Large* (1914), *Weights and Measures* (1917), *Something Else Again* (1920), and *So There* (1923), reveal a spirit which is essentially one of mockery. These contain impudent—and faithful—paraphrases of Horace and Propertius, last-line twists *à la* O. Henry (with whom Adams wrote a comic opera that never reached New York), and a healthy satire that runs sharply through the smooth lines.

THE RICH MAN

The rich man has his motor-car,
  His country and his town estate.
He smokes a fifty-cent cigar
  And jeers at Fate.

He frivols through the livelong day,
He knows not Poverty, her pinch.
His lot seems light, his heart seems gay;
He has a cinch.

Yet though my lamp burns low and dim,
Though I must slave for livelihood—
Think you that I would change with him?
You bet I would!

THOSE TWO BOYS

When Bill was a lad he was terribly bad.
He worried his parents a lot;
He'd lie and he'd swear and pull little girls' hair;
His boyhood was naught but a blot.

At play and in school he would fracture each rule—
In mischief from autumn to spring;
And the villagers knew when to manhood he grew
He would never amount to a thing.

When Jim was a child he was not very wild;
He was known as a good little boy;
He was honest and bright and the teacher's delight—
To his mother and father a joy.

All the neighbors were sure that his virtue'd endure,
That his life would be free of a spot;
They were certain that Jim had a great head on him
And that Jim would amount to a lot.

And Jim grew to manhood and honor and fame
And bears a good name;
While Bill is shut up in a dark prison cell—
You never can tell.

JOHN G. NEIHARDT

John Gneisenau Neihardt was born in Sharpsburg, Illinois, January 8, 1881. He completed a scientific course at Nebraska Normal College in 1897 and lived among the Omaha Indians for six years (1901-7), studying their customs, characteristics and legends.

Although he had already published two books, *A Bundle of Myrrh* (1908) was his first volume to attract notice. It was full of enthusiastic, insistent virility—a quality which was extended (and overemphasized) in *Man-Song* (1909). Neihardt found a new restraint in *The Stranger at the Gate* (1911), the best of the lyrics from these three volumes appearing in *The Quest* (1916).

Neihardt meanwhile had been going deeper into folk-lore, the results of which appeared in *The Song of Hugh Glass* (1915), *The Song of Three Friends* (1919), *The Song of the Indian Wars* (1926). In 1920 the second of these divided the annual prize offered by the Poetry Society, halving the honors with Gladys Cromwell's *Poems*. These three of Neihardt's are detailed long poems, part of a projected epic series celebrating the winning of the West by the pioneers. What prevents these volumes from fulfilling the breadth at which they aim is the disparity between the author's story and his style. Legend and locution are joined without being united; essentially racy narratives are recited in an archaic, incongruous speech. Yet, in spite of a rhetoric that considers prairies and trappers in terms of "Ilion," "Iseult," "Clotho," the "dim far shore of Styx," Neihardt has achieved his effects with no little skill. Dramatic and dignified, his works are American in conception if not in execution.

WHEN I AM DEAD

When I am dead and nervous hands have thrust
My body downward into careless dust;
I think the grave cannot suffice to hold
My spirit prisoned in the sunless mold!
Some subtle memory of you shall be
A resurrection of the life of me.
Yea, I shall be, because I love you so,
The speechless spirit of all things that grow.
You shall not touch a flower but it shall be
Like a caress upon the cheek of me.
I shall be patient in the common grass
That I may feel your footfall when you pass.
I shall be kind as rain and pure as dew,
A loving spirit 'round the life of you.
When your soft cheeks by perfumed winds are fanned,
'Twill be my kiss—and you will understand.

But when some sultry, storm-bleared sun has set,
I will be lightning if you dare forget!

CRY OF THE PEOPLE

Tremble before thy chattels,
Lords of the scheme of things!
Fighters of all earth's battles,
Ours is the might of kings!
Guided by seers and sages,
The world's heart-beat for a drum,
Snapping the chains of ages,
Out of the night we come!

Lend us no ear that pities!
Offer no almoner's hand!
Alms for the builders of cities!
When will you understand?
Down with your pride of birth
And your golden gods of trade!
A man is worth to his mother, Earth,
All that a man has made!

We are the workers and makers.
We are no longer dumb!
Tremble, O Shirkers and Takers!
Sweeping the earth—we come!
Ranked in the world-wide dawn,
Marching into the day!
The night is gone and the sword is drawn
And the scabbard is thrown away!

LET ME LIVE OUT MY YEARS

Let me live out my years in heat of blood!
Let me die drunken with the dreamer's wine!
Let me not see this soul-house built of mud
Go toppling to the dust—a vacant shrine.

Let me go quickly, like a candle light
Snuffed out just at the heyday of its glow.
Give me high noon—and let it then be night!
Thus would I go.

And grant that when I face the grisly Thing,
My song may trumpet down the gray Perhaps.
Let me be as a tune-swept fiddlestring
That feels the Master Melody—and snaps!

WITTER BYNNER

Witter Bynner was born in Brooklyn, New York, August 10, 1881. He was graduated from Harvard in 1902 and has been assistant editor of various periodicals as well as adviser to publishers. He spent much of his time lecturing on poetry, traveling in the Orient and studying the American Indian. He lives most of the year in Santa Fé, New Mexico.

Young Harvard (1907), the first of Bynner's volumes, was, as the name implies, a celebration of his *Alma Mater*. *The New World* (1915) is a much riper and far more ambitious effort. In this extended poem, Bynner sought—almost too determinedly—to translate the ideals of democracy into verse. Neither of these volumes displays its author's gifts at their best, for Bynner is, first of all, a lyric poet. *Grenstone Poems* (1917) and *A Canticle of Pan* (1920) reveal a natural singing voice. Bynner harmonizes in many keys; transposing, modulating and shifting from one tonality to another. This very ease is his handicap, for Bynner's facility leads him not only to write too much, but in too many different styles. Many of his poems seem like sounding-boards that echo the tones of every poet except the composer of them. Instead of a fusion of gifts we have, too often, as in *Caravan* (1925), only a confusion.

When Bynner is least dexterous he is most ingratiating. When he does not try to sound the whole gamut of modern poetry from the lyrics of A. E. Housman to the attenuated epigrams of Ezra Pound, he can strike his own note with clarity. Even in *The Beloved Stranger* (1919), where the borrowed accents of his *alter ego* are only too apparent, one is arrested by lines of charm and fluency. Here, as in *Grenstone Poems*, a personality transpires.

Under the pseudonym "Emanuel Morgan" Bynner was co-author with Arthur Davison Ficke (writing under the name of "Anne Knish") of *Spectra* (1916). *Spectra* was a serious burlesque of some of the extreme manifestations of modern poetic tendencies—a remarkable hoax that deceived many of the radical propagandists as well as most of the conservative critics. A volume in collaboration with Kiang Kang-Hu, *The Jade Mountain* (1929), included three hundred poems of the T'ang Dynasty alertly translated.

Bynner's studies in Chinese poetry influenced his transcriptions of the spirit of American Indian rituals. Curiously enough, there is no incongruity. *Indian Earth* (1929) summons the effect rather than the rhythms of the buffalo dance at Santo Domingo, the rain invocation at Cochiti and the Shalako dance-dramas in a technique as delicate as the brush-strokes used to evoke the shifting scene. This is Bynner's deftest and perhaps most valuable work.

GRASS-TOPS

What bird are you in the grass-tops?
Your poise is enough of an answer,
With your wing-tips like up-curving fingers
Of the slow-moving hands of a dancer . . .

And what is so nameless as beauty,
Which poets, who give it a name,
Are only unnaming forever?—
Content, though it go, that it came.

VOICES

O there were lights and laughter
  And the motions to and fro
Of people as they enter
  And people as they go . . .

And there were many voices
  Vying at the feast,
But mostly I remember
  Yours—who spoke the least.

A FARMER REMEMBERS LINCOLN[1]

"Lincoln?—
Well, I was in the old Second Maine,
The first regiment in Washington from the Pine Tree State.
Of course I didn't get the butt of the clip;
We was there for guardin' Washington—
We was all green.

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[1] See pages 105, 163, 189, 333, 334, 354, 467.

"I ain't never ben to the theayter in my life—
I didn't know how to behave.
I ain't never ben since.
I can see as plain as my hat the box where he sat in
When he was shot.
I can tell you, sir, there was a panic
When we found our President was in the shape he was in!
Never saw a soldier in the world but what liked him.

"Yes, sir. His looks was kind o' hard to forget.
He was a spare man,
An old farmer.
Everything was all right, you know,
But he wasn't a smooth-appearin' man at all—
Not in no ways;
Thin-faced, long-necked,
And a swellin' kind of a thick lip like.

"And he was a jolly old fellow—always cheerful;
He wasn't so high but the boys could talk to him their own ways.
While I was servin' at the Hospital
He'd come in and say, 'You look nice in here,'
Praise us up, you know.
And he'd bend over and talk to the boys—
And he'd talk so good to 'em—so close—
That's why I call him a farmer.
I don't mean that everything about him wasn't all right, you understand,
It's just—well, I was a farmer—
And he was my neighbor, anybody's neighbor.
I guess even you young folks would 'a' liked him."

TRAIN-MATES

Outside hove Shasta, snowy height on height,
A glory; but a negligible sight,
For you had often seen a mountain-peak
But not my paper. So we came to speak . . .
A smoke, a smile,—a good way to commence
The comfortable exchange of difference!

You a young engineer, five feet eleven,
Forty-five chest, with football in your heaven,
Liking a road-bed newly built and clean,
Your fingers hot to cut away the green
Of brush and flowers that bring beside a track
The kind of beauty steel lines ought to lack,—
And I a poet, wistful of my betters,
Reading George Meredith's high-hearted letters,
Joining betweenwhiles in the mingled speech
Of a drummer, circus-man, and parson, each
Absorbing to himself—as I to me
And you to you—a glad identity!

After a time, when others went away,
A curious kinship made us choose to stay,
Which I could tell you now; but at the time
You thought of baseball teams and I of rhyme,
Until we found that we were college men
And smoked more easily and smiled again;
And I from Cambridge cried, the poet still:
"I know your fine Greek theater on the hill
At Berkeley!" With your happy Grecian head
Upraised, "I never saw the place," you said—
"Once I was free of class, I always went
Out to the field."

Young engineer, you meant
As fair a tribute to the better part
As ever I did. Beauty of the heart
Is evident in temples. But it breathes
Alive where athletes quicken curly wreaths,
Which are the lovelier because they die.
You are a poet quite as much as I,
Though differences appear in what we do,
And I an athlete quite as much as you.
Because you half-surmise my quarter-mile
And I your quatrain, we could greet and smile.
Who knows but we shall look again and find
The circus-man and drummer, not behind
But leading in our visible estate—
As discus-thrower and as laureate?

THE SINGING HUNTSMAN

The huntswoman-moon was my mother,
And the song-man, Apollo, my sire;
And I know either trick like the other,
The trick of the bow and the lyre.

And when beauty darts by me or lingers,
When it opens or folds its wing,
On bow and on lyre are my fingers,
And I shoot, and I sing.

JAMES OPPENHEIM

James Oppenheim was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, May 24, 1882. Two years later his family moved to New York City, where he has lived most of his life. After a public school education, he took special courses at Columbia University (1901-3) and engaged in settlement work, acting in the capacity of assistant head worker of the Hudson Guild Settlement, and superintendent of the Hebrew Technical School for Girls (1904-7). His studies and experiences on the lower East Side of New York furnished material for his first book of short stories, *Doctor Rast* (1909).

Oppenheim's initial venture as a poet, *Monday Morning and Other Poems* (1909), was imitative and experimental. In spite of its obvious indebtedness to Whitman, most of the verses are in formal meters and regular (though ragged) rhyme. Beauty is sought, but seldom captured here; the message is coughed out between bursts of eloquence and fits of stammering.

Songs for the New Age (1914) made Oppenheim his own liberator. The speech, echoing the Whitmanic sonority, develops a music that is strangely Biblical and yet local. It is the expression of an ancient people reacting to modernity, of a race in solution. (See Preface.) This volume, like all of Oppenheim's subsequent work, is analysis in terms of poetry; a slow searching beneath the musical surface attempts to diagnose the tortured soul of man and the twisted times he lives in. The old Isaiah note, with a new introspection, rises out of such poems as "The Slave," "We Dead," "Tasting the Earth"; the music and imagery of the Psalms are heard in "The Flocks," and "The Runner in the Skies."

War and Laughter (1916) holds much of its predecessor's fervor. The Semitic blend of delight and disillusion—that quality which hates the world for its hypocrisies and loves it in spite of them—is revealed in "Greed," in the ironic "Report on the Planet Earth" and the affirmative "Laughter."

The Book of Self (1917) is an imperfect fusion. Oppenheim's preoccupation with analytical psychology mars the effect of the long passages which contain flashes of clairvoyance. Most of it reads like *Leaves of Grass* translated by Dr. Freud. *The Solitary* (1919) is a stride forward; its major section, a long symbolic poem called "The Sea," breathes the same note that was the burden of the earlier books: "We are flesh on the way to godhood."

The Mystic Warrior (1921) is an autobiography in free verse. It is a chronicle of inhibition, the effort of an artist to find himself and freedom in a rigid, mechanistic environment. Oppenheim's studies and practice in psychoanalysis are evident in this volume; the chief figure emerges as a weak and groping stumbler towards immensities, a figure lost between self-contempt and over-reaching egotism. *Golden Bird* (1923) is a return to Oppenheim's less personal mysticism. It suffers from loquacity and a curious "yearning back," but some of the poems (such as "Hebrews") rise from a rather cloying catalog of perished beauty.

The Sea, Oppenheim's most comprehensive volume, was published in 1923. It includes the best of all his previous books of poetry with the addition of several "connecting" verses.

Besides his poetry, Oppenheim has published several volumes of short stories, five novels, and two poetic plays. During 1916-17 he was editor of that provoking but short-lived magazine, *The Seven Arts.*

THE SLAVE

They set the slave free, striking off his chains . . .
Then he was as much of a slave as ever.

He was still chained to servility,
He was still manacled to indolence and sloth,
He was still bound by fear and superstition,
By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery . . .
His slavery was not in the chains,
But in himself. . . .

They can only set free men free . . .
And there is no need of that:
Free men set themselves free.

THE RUNNER IN THE SKIES

Who is the runner in the skies,
With her blowing scarf of stars,
And our Earth and sun hovering like bees about her blossoming heart?
Her feet are on the winds, where space is deep,
Her eyes are nebulous and veiled;
She hurries through the night to a far lover . . .

THE LINCOLN CHILD[1]

Clearing in the forest,
In the wild Kentucky forest,
And the stars, wintry stars strewn above!
O Night that is the starriest
Since Earth began to roll—
For a Soul
Is born out of Love!
Mother love, father love, love of Eternal God—
Stars have pushed aside to let him through—
Through heaven's sun-sown deeps
One sparkling ray of God
Strikes the clod—
(And while an angel-host through wood and clearing sweeps!)
Born in the wild
The Child—
Naked, ruddy, new,
Wakes with the piteous human cry and at the mother-heart sleeps.

To the mother wild berries and honey,
To the father awe without end,
To the child a swaddling of flannel—
And a dawn rolls sharp and sunny
And the skies of winter bend
To see the first sweet word penned
In the godliest human annal.

Frail Mother of the Wilderness,
How strange the world shines in

---

[1] See pages 105, 163, 189, 333, 334, 349, 467.

And the cabin becomes chapel
And the baby lies secure—
Sweet Mother of the Wilderness,
New worlds for you begin,
You have tasted of the apple
That giveth wisdom sure. . . .

Soon in the wide wilderness,
On a branch blown over a creek,
Up a trail of the wild coon,
In a lair of the wild bee,
The rugged boy, by danger's stress,
Learnt the speech the wild things speak,
Learnt the Earth's eternal tune
Of strife-engendered harmony—
Went to school where Life itself was master,
Went to church where Earth was minister—
And in Danger and Disaster
Felt his future manhood stir!

All about him the land,
Eastern cities, Western prairie,
Wild, immeasurable, grand;
But he was lost where blossomy boughs make airy
Bowers in the forest, and the sand
Makes brook-water a clear mirror that gives back
Green branches and trunks black
And clouds across the heavens lightly fanned.
Yet all the Future dreams, eager to waken,
Within that woodland soul—
And the bough of boy has only to be shaken
That the fruit drop whereby this Earth shall roll
A little nearer God than ever before.
Little recks he of war,
Of national millions waiting on his word—
Dreams still the Event unstirred
In the heart of the boy, the little babe of the wild—
But the years hurry and the tide of the sea
Of Time flows fast and ebbs, and he, even he,
Must leave the wilderness, the wood-haunts wild.
Soon shall the cyclone of Humanity
Tearing through Earth suck up this little child

And whirl him to the top, where he shall be
Riding the storm-column in the lightning-stroke,
Calm at the peak, while down below worlds rage,
And Earth goes out in blood and battle-smoke,
And leaves him with the Sun—an epoch and an age!

And lo, as he grew ugly, gaunt,
And gnarled his way into a man,
What wisdom came to feed his want,
What worlds came near to let him scan!
And as he fathomed through and through
Our dark and sorry human scheme,
He knew what Shakespeare never knew,
What Dante never dared to dream—
That Men are one
Beneath the sun,
And before God are equal souls—
This truth was his,
And this it is
That round him such a glory rolls—
For not alone he knew it as a truth,
He made it of his blood, and of his brain—
He crowned it on the day when piteous Booth
Sent a whole land to weeping with world pain—
When a black cloud blotted the sun
And men stopped in the streets to sob,
To think Old Abe was dead.
Dead, and the day's work still undone,
Dead, and war's ruining heart athrob,
And earth with fields of carnage freshly spread—
Millions died fighting,
But in this man we mourned
Those millions, and one other—
And the States today uniting,
North and South,
East and West,
Speak with a people's mouth
A rhapsody of rest
To him our beloved best,
Our big, gaunt, homely brother—

Our huge Atlantic coast-storm in a shawl,
Our cyclone in a smile—our President,
Who knew and loved us all
With love more eloquent
Than his own words—with Love that in real deeds was spent. . . .

O living God, O Thou who living art,
And real, and near, draw, as at that babe's birth,
Into our souls and sanctify our Earth—
Let down Thy strength that we endure
Mighty and pure
As mothers and fathers of our own Lincoln-child—
Make us more wise, more true, more strong, more mild,
That we may day by day
Rear this wild blossom through its soft petals of clay;
That hour by hour
We may endow it with more human power
Than is our own—
That it may reach the goal
Our Lincoln long has shown!
O Child, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone,
Soul torn from out our Soul!
May you be great, and pure, and beautiful—
A Soul to search this world
To be a father, brother, comrade, son,
A toiler powerful;
A man whose toil is done
One with God's Law above:
Work wrought through Love!

NIGHT NOTE

A little moon was restless in Eternity
And, shivering beneath the stars,
Dropped in the hiding arms of the western hill.
Night's discord ceased:
The visible universe moved in an endless rhythm:
The wheel of the heavens turned to the pulse of a cricket in the grass.

TASTING THE EARTH

In a dark hour, tasting the Earth.

As I lay on my couch in the muffled night, and the rain lashed my window,
And my forsaken heart would give me no rest, no pause and no peace,
Though I turned my face far from the wailing of my bereavement. . . .
Then I said: I will eat of this sorrow to its last shred,
I will take it unto me utterly,
I will see if I be not strong enough to contain it. . . .
What do I fear? Discomfort?
How can it hurt me, this bitterness?

The miracle, then!
Turning toward it, and giving up to it,
I found it deeper than my own self. . . .
O dark great mother-globe so close beneath me . . .
It was she with her inexhaustible grief,
Ages of blood-drenched jungles, and the smoking of craters, and the roar of tempests,
And moan of the forsaken seas,
It was she with the hills beginning to walk in the shapes of the dark-hearted animals,
It was she risen, dashing away tears and praying to dumb skies, in the pomp-crumbling tragedy of man . . .
It was she, container of all griefs, and the buried dust of broken hearts,
Cry of the christs and the lovers and the child-stripped mothers,
And ambition gone down to defeat, and the battle overborne,
And the dreams that have no waking. . . .

My heart became her ancient heart:
On the food of the strong I fed, on dark strange life itself:
Wisdom-giving and somber with the unremitting love of ages. . . .
There was dank soil in my mouth,
And bitter sea on my lips,
In a dark hour, tasting the Earth.

HEBREWS

I come of a mighty race . . . I come of a very mighty race . . .
Adam was a mighty man, and Noah a captain of the moving waters,
Moses was a stern and splendid king, yea, so was Moses . . .
Give me more songs like David's to shake my throat to the pit of the belly,
And let me roll in the Isaiah thunder . . .
Ho! the mightiest of our young men was born under a star in midwinter . . .
His name is written on the sun and it is frosted on the moon . . .
Earth breaths him like an eternal spring; he is a second sky over the Earth.

Mighty race! mighty race!—my flesh, my flesh
Is a cup of song,
Is a well in Asia . . .
I go about with a dark heart where the Ages sit in a divine thunder . . .
My blood is cymbal-clashed and the anklets of the dancers tinkle there . . .
Harp and psaltery, harp and psaltery make drunk my spirit . . .
I am of the terrible people, I am of the strange Hebrews . . .
Amongst the swarms fixed like the rooted stars, my folk is a streaming Comet,
The Wanderer of Eternity, the eternal Wandering Jew . . .

Ho! we have turned against the mightiest of our young men
And in that denial we have taken on the Christ,
And the two thieves beside the Christ,
And the Magdalen at the feet of the Christ,
And the Judas with thirty silver pieces selling the Christ,
And our twenty centuries in Europe have the shape of a Cross
On which we have hung in disaster and glory . . .

Mighty race! mighty race!—my flesh, my flesh
Is a cup of song,
Is a well in Asia.

Hermann Hagedorn was born July 18, 1882, in New York City. He was class poet at Harvard, receiving his B.A. from that University in 1907. He attended Columbia University 1908-09.

Hagedorn began his career as a poet, "A Troop of the Guard" being one of the best class-poems of the generation. Somewhat later, his gift suffered a setback. His *Life of Roosevelt* (1918) attracted attention in political circles, and in 1920 certain factors in the Republican Party persuaded him to undertake a volume glorifying their potential candidate. The result was *That Human Being, Leonard Wood* (1920), a piece of dull hack work which Hagedorn's friends have been eager to forget. Specializing in Rooseveltania, Hagedorn published *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands* (1921) and a selection of speeches and writings under the title *The Americanism of Theodore Roosevelt* (1923).

Poems and Ballads (1913) seldom rises above prettiness and technical fluency. A few of the ballads have dramatic power as well as dexterity; "Wings" has a free gesture in its rapid pace, and "Doors" is a sonnet in the tradition which no anthologist of the period can afford to miss.

DOORS

Like a young child who to his mother's door
   Runs eager for the welcoming embrace,
   And finds the door shut, and with troubled face
Calls and through sobbing calls, and o'er and o'er
Calling, storms at the panel—so before
   A door that will not open, sick and numb,
   I listen for a word that will not come,
And know, at last, I may not enter more.

Silence! And through the silence and the dark
   By that closed door, the distant sob of tears
      Beats on my spirit, as on fairy shores
The spectral sea; and through the sobbing, hark!
   Down the fair-chambered corridor of years,
      The quiet shutting, one by one, of doors.

Thomas S. Jones, Jr., was born in Boonville, on the edge of the Adirondacks, New York, November 6, 1882, received his A.B. in 1904 from Cornell, and spent most of his life in the state of his birth. He is the author of ten volumes of lyrics and lyrical sonnets, his first volume *The Path o' Dreams* being published in 1904. Three representative collections are *The Voice in the Silence* (1911), *The Rose Jar* (1914), and *Sonnets of the Saints* (1925). *Sonnets of the Cross* was reprinted several times since its first edition in 1922. Although he has written many more ambitious verses, none has been so popular as the eight lines here reprinted. Jones died in New York City in 1932.

SOMETIMES

Across the fields of yesterday
  He sometimes comes to me,
A little lad just back from play—
  The lad I used to be.

And yet he smiles so wistfully
  Once he has crept within,
I wonder if he hopes to see
  The man I might have been.

ALICE CORBIN

Alice Corbin (Mrs. William Penhallow Henderson) was born in St. Louis, Missouri. She has been Associate Editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* since 1912, co-editing (with Harriet Monroe) *The New Poetry, An Anthology* (1917, Revised Edition 1923). Since 1916 she has lived in Santa Fé, New Mexico.

The Spinning Woman of the Sky (1912) contains few hints of originality. It is cast in an entirely different key than Miss Corbin's subsequent efforts. Her later verses are much richer; they reveal a close contact with primitive people and native folklore. Her southern and far western sketches are particularly colorful; a volume of New Mexico studies, *Red Earth* (1920), being full of sympathetic records. Even in the paraphrases of folk-tunes, she maintains her own low-pitched voice whether the accent is one of dialect or the singer's natural tone.

ECHOES OF CHILDHOOD

(*A Folk-Medley*)

UNCLE JIM

Old Uncle Jim was as blind as a mole,
But he could fiddle Virginia Reels,
Till you felt the sap run out of your heels,
Till you knew the devil had got your soul—

Down the middle and swing yo' partners,
Up agin and salute her low,
Shake yo' foot an' keep a-goin',
Down the middle an' do-se-do!

Mind yo' manners an' doan git keerless,
Swing yo' lady and bow full low,
S'lute yo' partner an' turn yo' neighbor,
Gran'-right-an'-left, and aroun' you go!

DELPHY

Delphy's breast was wide and deep,
A shelf to lay a child asleep,
  Swing low, sweet chariot, swing low;
Rocking like a lifted boat
On lazy tropic seas afloat,
  Swing low, sweet chariot, swing low.

Delphy, when my mother died,
Taught me wisdom, curbed my pride,
  Swing low, sweet chariot, swing low;
And when she laid her body down,
It shone, a jewel, in His crown,
  Swing low, sweet chariot, swing low.

. . . . . .

(*Underneath the southern moon*
I was cradled to the tune
Of the banjo and the fiddle
And the plaintive negro croon.)

MANDY'S RELIGION

I'se got religion an' I doan care
Who knows that God an' I are square,
I wuz carryin' home my mistis' wash
When God came an' spoke to me out'n de hush.

An' I th'ew de wash up inter de air,
An' I climbed a tree to de golden stair;
Ef it hadn't a been fur Mistah Wright
I'd had ter stayed dere all de night!

. . . . . .

(*Underneath the southern moon*
I was cradled to the tune
Of the banjo and the fiddle
And the plaintive negro croon.)

BETSY'S BOY

Betsy's boy could shuffle and clog,
Though you couldn't get him to saw a log.
Laziest boy about the place
Till he started to dance—and you saw his face!
It was all lit up like a mask of bronze
Set in a niche between temple gongs—
For he would dance and never stop
Till he fell on the floor like a spun-out top.
His feet hung loose from his supple waist,
He danced without stopping, he danced without haste.
Like Shiva the Hindu his feet were bound
In the rhythm of stars and of streams underground:

Banjo playin' and de sanded floor,
Fiddle cryin', always callin' more,
Can't help dancin' though de preacher says
Can't git to heaven doin' no sich ways,
Can't help dancin' though de devil stan's
With a pitch-fork waitin' in his brimstone han's;

Got—ter—keep—dancin',—can't—stop—now,
Got—ter—keep—dancin',—I—doan—know—
how . . .

Banjo playin' and de sanded floor,
Fiddle cryin', always callin' more,
People's faces lookin' scared an' white,
Hands a-clappin' an' eyes starin' bright.
Can't help dancin' though de candle's dyin',
Can't help dancin' while de fiddle's cryin';
Got—ter—keep—dancin',—can't—stop—now,
Got—ter—keep—dancin',—I—doan—know—
how!

THE OLD NEGRO ALONE

Who dat droppin' froo de crumblin' roof?—
Mah soul am ole, I done sinned mah sin;
I'se waitin' fo' de Lawd to let me in:
Doan you dare show no debbil's hoof
Drappin' on down froo de hole in de roof!

Who dat croakin' on de winder-sill?—
I'll tek dis poker in mah han'
An' mek you join de joyless ban'
Ob dem dat's crossed de holy will
Ef yo' doan stop croakin' on de winder-sill!

O Lawd, hab mussy! Mah soul am ole,
I'se heahed de cock crowin' an' de bayin' houn';
Hit's still an' dark in de undergroun',
I doan wan' ter lie in de rain an' de cole:
Lawd, hab mussy, an' save mah soul!

LOVE ME AT LAST

Love me at last, or if you will not,
Leave me;
Hard words could never, as these half-words,
Grieve me:
Love me at last—or leave me.

Love me at last, or let the last word uttered
   Be but your own;
Love me or leave me—as a cloud, a vapor,
   Or a bird flown.
Love me at last—I am but sliding water
   Over a stone.

LOLA RIDGE

Lola Ridge was born in Dublin, Ireland, leaving there in infancy and spending her childhood in Sydney, Australia. After living some years in New Zealand, she returned to Australia to study art. In 1907, she came to the United States, supporting herself for three years by writing fiction for popular magazines. She stopped this work only, as she says, "because I found I would have to do so if I wished to survive as an artist." For several years she earned her living in a variety of ways—as organizer for an educational movement, as advertisement writer, as illustrator, artist's model, factory-worker. In 1918, *The New Republic* published her long poem, *The Ghetto*, and Miss Ridge, until then totally unknown, became the "discovery" of the year.

Her volume, *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1918), contains one poem that is brilliant, several that are powerful and none that is mediocre. The title-poem is its pinnacle; in it Miss Ridge touches depths which are also heights. It is a poem of the city, of its sodden brutalities, its sudden beauties. Swift figures shine from these lines, like barbaric colors leaping out of darkness; images are surprising but never strained; confusion is given clarity. In her other poems—especially in "The Song of Iron," "Faces" and the poignant portrait "Marie"—the same dignity is maintained, though with somewhat less magic.

Sun-Up (1920) and *Red Flag* (1924) are less integrated, more frankly experimental. But the same vibrancy and restrained power that distinguished her first book are manifest here. Her delineations are sensitive, her phrases vivid yet natural. In spite of an overuse of similes, she accomplishes the maximum in effect with a minimum of effort.

Firehead (1929) is a moving narrative poem, the time and scene of which are the day of the Crucifixion. By making John, Peter and the two Marys interpret the significance of the event Miss Ridge has written a poem of psychological depth and urgent penetration. If anything, the effort is too grandiose; the reader loses sight of the central figure in a bright cloud of metaphors. Phrases rise, not from the core of the tragedy, but from the prodded literary mind; the Passion is lost in a panorama. And yet there is a finality in *Firehead* beyond the finality of phrase. Passages move in and out of the large design which take possession of the imagination, passages that are music visualized and "time made audible."

PASSAGES FROM "THE GHETTO"

Old Sodos no longer makes saddles.
He has forgotten how . . .
Time spins like a crazy dial in his brain,
And night by night
I see the love-gesture of his arm
In its green-greasy coat-sleeve
Circling the Book,
And the candles gleaming starkly
On the blotched-paper whiteness of his face,
Like a miswritten psalm . . .
Night by night
I hear his lifted praise,
Like a broken whinnying
Before the Lord's shut gate.

. . . . .

Lights go out
And the stark trunks of the factories
Melt into the drawn darkness,
Sheathing like a seamless garment.

And mothers take home their babies,
Waxen and delicately curled,
Like little potted flowers closed under the stars. . . .

Lights go out . . .
And colors rush together,
Fusing and floating away.
Pale worn gold like the settings of old jewels . . .
Mauve, exquisite, tremulous, and luminous purples,
And burning spires in aureoles of light
Like shimmering auras.
They are covering up the pushcarts . . .
Now all have gone save an old man with mirrors—

Little oval mirrors like tiny pools.
He shuffles up a darkened street
And the moon burnishes his mirrors till they shine like phosphorus. . . .
The moon like a skull,
Staring out of eyeless sockets at the old men trundling home the pushcarts.

. . . .

A sallow dawn is in the sky
As I enter my little green room.
Without, the frail moon,
Worn to a silvery tissue,
Throws a faint glamor on the roofs,
And down the shadowy spires
Lights tip-toe out . . .
Softly as when lovers close street doors.

Out of the Battery
A little wind
Stirs idly—as an arm
Trails over a boat's side in dalliance—
Rippling the smooth dead surface of the heat,
And Hester street,
Like a forlorn woman over-borne
By many babies at her teats,
Turns on her trampled bed to meet the day.

FACES

A late snow beats
With cold white fists upon the tenements—
Hurriedly drawing blinds and shutters,
Like tall old slatterns
Pulling aprons about their heads.

Lights slanting out of Mott Street
Gibber out,
Or dribble through bar-room slits,
Anonymous shapes
Conniving behind shuttered panes

Caper and disappear . . .
Where the Bowery
Is throbbing like a fistula
Back of her ice-scabbed fronts.

Livid faces
Glimmer in furtive doorways,
Or spill out of the black pockets of alleys,
Smears of faces like muddied beads,
Making a ghastly rosary
The night mumbles over
And the snow with its devilish and silken whisper . . .
Patrolling arcs
Blowing shrill blasts over the Bread Line
Stalk them as they pass,
Silent as though accouched of the darkness,
And the wind noses among them,
    Like a skunk
That roots about the heart . . .

Colder:
And the Elevated slams upon the silence
Like a ponderous door.
Then all is still again,
Save for the wind fumbling over
The emptily swaying faces—
The wind rummaging
Like an old Jew . . .

Faces in glimmering rows . . .
(No sign of the abject life—
Not even a blasphemy . . .)
But the spindle legs keep time
To a limping rhythm,
And the shadows twitch upon the snow
    Convulsively—
As though death played
With some ungainly dolls.

NEW ORLEANS

Do you remember
Honey-melon moon
Dripping thick sweet light
Where Canal Street saunters off by herself among quiet trees?
And the faint decayed patchouli—
Fragrance of New Orleans . . .
New Orleans,
Like a dead tube rose
Upheld in the warm air . . .
Miraculously whole.

WIND IN THE ALLEYS

Wind, rising in the alleys,
My spirit lifts in you like a banner
  streaming free of hot walls.
You are full of unshaped dreams . . .
You are laden with beginnings . . .
There is hope in you . . . not sweet . . .
  acrid as blood in the mouth.
Come into my tossing dust
Scattering the peace of old deaths,
Wind rising out of the alleys
Carrying stuff of flame.

MARIE

Marie's face is a weathered sign
To the palace of gliding cars
Over the bend where the trolley dips:
A dime for a wired rose,
Nickel-a-ride to the zig-zag stars,
And then men in elegant clothes,
That feed you on cardboard ships,
And the sea-floats so fine!—
Like a green and gorgeous bubble
God blew out of his lips.

When Marie carries down the stair
The ritual of her face,

Your greeting takes her unaware,
And her glance is timid-bold
As a dog's unsure of its place.
With that hair, of the rubbed-off gold
Of a wedding-ring worn to a thread,
In a halo about the head,
And those luminous eyes in their rims of paint,
She looks a bedizened saint.

But when the worn moon, like a face still beautiful,
Wavers above the Battery,
And light comes in, mauve-gray,
Squeezing through shutters of furnished rooms
Till only corners hold spots of darkness—
As a tablecloth its purple stains
When a festival is ended—
Then Marie creeps into the house.

The paint is lonesome on her cheek.
The paint is gone from off her mouth
That curls back loosely from her teeth.
She pushes slackly at the dawn
That crawls upon the yellow blind,
And enters like an aimless moth
Whose dim wings hover and alight
Upon the blurred face of the clock,
Or on the pallor of her feet—
Or anything that's white.
Until dispersed upon the sheet,
All limp, her waxen body lies
In its delinquent grace,
Like a warm bent candle
That flares about its place.

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

Arthur Davison Ficke was born at Davenport, Iowa, November 10, 1883. He received his A.B. at Harvard (1904), studied for the law and was admitted to the bar in 1908. In 1919, after two years' service in France, he gave up his law practice and devoted himself to literature exclusively.

Ficke is the author of eleven volumes of verse, the most representative of which are *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter* (1914), *The Man on the Hilltop* (1915) and *An April Elegy* (1917). In these the author succeeded in combining clarity of vision with an intensified seriousness, especially in the sonnets and shorter poems.

Having been an expert collector and student of Japanese prints, Ficke has written two books on this theme. His intellectual equipment is reënforced by a gift of satire. Writing under the pseudonym "Anne Knish," he was one of the co-authors (with Witter Bynner) of *Spectra* (1916), which, caricaturing some of the wilder outgrowths of the new poetry, was taken seriously by a majority of the critics and proved to be a brilliant hoax.

Out of Silence and Other Poems (1924) and *Mountain Against Mountain* (1929) are records of a romanticist's effort to escape a world he half understands and wholly fears. The poet—at least so his poems assure us—is "homesick in modernity." Even the earth's beauty hurts; loveliness does not fulfill him, he is frustrated by it. Nevertheless, the foretold failure of his "secret, impossible hopes" does not prevent him from wringing an occasional if too protracted poignance from his defeat.

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN

She limps with halting painful pace,
   Stops, wavers and creeps on again;
Peers up with dim and questioning face,
   Void of desire or doubt or pain.

Her cheeks hang gray in waxen folds
   Wherein there stirs no blood at all.
A hand, like bundled cornstalks, holds
   The tatters of a faded shawl.

Where was a breast, sunk bones she clasps;
   A knot jerks where were woman-hips;
A ropy throat sends writhing gasps
   Up to the tight line of her lips.

Here strong the city's pomp is poured . . .
   She stands, unhuman, bleak, aghast:
An empty temple of the Lord
   From which the jocund Lord has passed.

He has builded him another house,
Whenceforth his flame, renewed and bright,
Shines stark upon these weathered brows
Abandoned to the final night.

THE THREE SISTERS

Gone are the three, those sisters rare
With wonder-lips and eyes ashine.
One was wise and one was fair,
And one was mine.

Ye mourners, weave for the sleeping hair
Of only two your ivy vine.
For one was wise and one was fair,
But one was mine.

SONNET

There are strange shadows fostered of the moon,
More numerous than the clear-cut shade of day. . . .
Go forth, when all the leaves whisper of June,
Into the dusk of swooping bats at play;
Or go into that late November dusk
When hills take on the noble lines of death,
And on the air the faint, astringent musk
Of rotting leaves pours vaguely troubling breath.
Then shall you see shadows whereof the sun,
Knows nothing—aye, a thousand shadows there
Shall leap and flicker and stir and stay and run,
Like petrels of the changing foul or fair;
Like ghosts of twilight, of the moon, of him
Whose homeland lies past each horizon's rim.

LEAF-MOVEMENT

From its thin branch high in the autumn wind
The yellow leaf now sails in upward flight;
Hovers at top-slope; then, a whirling bright
Eddy of motion, sinks. The storm behind

With gusts and veering tyrannies would uphold
Even as it downward beats this gorgeous thing
Which like an angel's lost and shattered wing
Against the gray sky sweeps its broken gold.
Another eddy, desperate or in mirth,
Brings it to rest here on the crackled earth
Where men can see it better than on the bough.
What quite preposterous irony of wind's will
Touches it where it lies, golden and still,
And once more lifts it vainly heavenward now!

BADGER CLARK

Badger Clark was born at Albia, Iowa, in 1883. He moved to Dakota Territory at the age of three months and now lives in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Clark is one of the few men who have lived to see their work become part of folk-lore, many of his songs having been adapted and paraphrased by the cowboys who have made them their own. A version of one of his poems ("The Glory Trail"), after wide circulation among the ranchers and cowpunchers, was printed as an example of anonymous folk-song in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* under the title "High-Chin Bob"—and credited to "Author Unknown." Lomax's collection of cowboy songs also contains this interesting "anonymous" variant which is reprinted below.

Sun and Saddle Leather (1915) and *Grass-Grown Trails* (1917) are the expression of a native singer; happy, spontaneous and seldom "literary." There is wind in these songs; the smell of camp-smoke and the colors of prairie sunsets rise from them. Free, for the most part, from affectations, Clark is easy in his use of ranch and prairie vernacular.

THE GLORY TRAIL

'Way high up the Mogollons,[1]
   Among the mountain tops,
A lion cleaned a yearlin's bones
   And licked his thankful chops,
When on the picture who should ride,
   A-trippin' down a slope,
But High-Chin Bob, with sinful pride
   And mav'rick-hungry rope.

[1] Pronounced Mokiónes, with the accent on the last syllable.

"Oh, glory be to me," says he,
"And fame's unfadin' flowers!
All meddlin' hands are far away;
I ride my good top-hawse today
And I'm top-rope of the Lazy J—
Hi! kitty cat, you're ours!"

That lion licked his paw so brown
And dreamed soft dreams of veal—
And then the circlin' loop sung down
And roped him 'round his meal.
He yowled quick fury to the world
Till all the hills yelled back;
The top-hawse gave a snort and whirled
And Bob caught up the slack.

"Oh, glory be to me," laughs he.
"We've hit the glory trail.
No human man as I have read
Darst loop a ragin' lion's head,
Nor ever hawse could drag one dead
Until we told the tale."

'Way high up the Mogollons
That top-hawse done his best,
Through whippin' brush and rattlin' stones,
From canyon-floor to crest.
But ever when Bob turned and hoped
A limp remains to find,
A red-eyed lion, belly-roped
But healthy, loped behind.

"Oh, glory be to me," grunts he.
"This glory trail is rough,
Yet even till the Judgment Morn
I'll keep this dally 'round the horn
For never any hero born
Could stoop to holler: 'Nuff!' "

Three suns had rode their circle home
Beyond the desert's rim,
And turned their star-herds loose to roam
The ranges high and dim;

Yet up and down and 'round and 'cross
  Bob pounded, weak and wan,
For pride still glued him to his hawse
  And glory drove him on.

"Oh, glory be to me," sighs he.
  "He kaint be drug to death,
But now I know beyond a doubt
Them heroes I have read about
Was only fools that stuck it out
  To end of mortal breath."

'Way high up the Mogollons
  A prospect man did swear
That moon dreams melted down his bones
  And hoisted up his hair:
A ribby cow-hawse thundered by,
  A lion trailed along,
A rider, ga'nt but chin on high,
  Yelled out a crazy song:

"Oh, glory be to me!" cries he,
  "And to my noble noose!
Oh, stranger, tell my pards below
I took a rampin' dream in tow,
And if I never lay him low,
  I'll never turn him loose!"

THE COYOTE

Trailing the last gleam after,
  In the valleys emptied of light,
Ripples a whimsical laughter
  Under the wings of the night,
Mocking the faded west airily,
Meeting the little bats merrily,
  Over the mesas it shrills
  To the red moon on the hills.

Mournfully rising and waning,
  Far through the moon-silvered land
Wails a weird voice of complaining
  Over the thorns and the sand.

Out of blue silences eerily,
On to the black mountains wearily,
   Till the dim desert is crossed,
   Wanders the cry, and is lost.

Here by the fire's ruddy streamers,
   Tired with our hopes and our fears,
We inarticulate dreamers
   Hark to the song of our years.
Up to the brooding divinity
Far in that sparkling infinity
   Cry our despair and delight,
   Voice of the Western night!

HARRY KEMP

Harry (Hibbard) Kemp, known as "the tramp-poet," was born in Youngstown, Ohio, December 15, 1883. He came East at the age of twelve, left school to enter a factory, but returned to high school to study English.

A globe-trotter by nature, he went to sea before finishing his high school course. He shipped first to Australia, then to China, from China to California, from California to the University of Kansas. After a few months in London in 1909 (he crossed the Atlantic as a stowaway) he returned to New York City, where he has lived ever since, founding his own theater in which he is actor, stage-manager, playwright and chorus.

Kemp's first book was a play, *Judas* (1910), a reversion of the Biblical figure along the lines of Paul Heyse's *Mary of Magdala.* His first collection of poems, *The Cry of Youth* (1914), like the subsequent volume, *The Passing God* (1919), is full of every kind of poetry except the kind one might imagine Kemp would write. Instead of crude and boisterous verse, here is a precise and over-polished poetry. Kemp has, strangely enough, taken the classic formalists for his models—one can detect timid whispers of Pope and Dryden among his lines.

Chanteys and Ballads (1920) is riper. The notes are more varied, the sense of personality is more pronounced. *Tramping on Life* (1922) is an autobiographical narrative, especially ingratiating in its presentation of Kemp's childhood. *The Love Rogue* (1923) is an adaptation from the Spanish of Tirso de Molina, a drama that Kemp insists is "the original Don Juan play." *Don Juan's Note-Book,* privately printed in 1929, is a sequence of rhymed, cynical and generally dull epigrams. His less assertive, traditional verse remains his best.

STREET LAMPS

Softly they take their being, one by one,
From the lamp-lighter's hand, after the sun
Has dropped to dusk . . . like little flowers they bloom
Set in long rows amid the growing gloom.

Who he who lights them is, I do not know,
Except that, every eve, with footfall slow
And regular, he passes by my room
And sets his gusty flowers of light a-bloom.

A PHANTASY OF HEAVEN

Perhaps he plays with cherubs now,
  Those little, golden boys of God,
Bending, with them, some silver bough,
  The while a seraph, head a-nod,

Slumbers on guard; how they will run
  And shout, if he should wake too soon,—
As fruit more golden than the sun
  And riper than the full-grown moon,

Conglobed in clusters, weighs them down,
  Like Atlas heaped with starry signs;
And, if they're tripped, heel over crown,
  By hidden coils of mighty vines,—

Perhaps the seraph, swift to pounce,
  Will hale them, vexed, to God—and He
Will only laugh, remembering, once
  He was a boy in Galilee!

CAPE'S END

There is battle here, there is clean and vigorous war,
There are bivouacs visited by night's every star,

There are long, barren slopes of encampment burned clean by
the sun,
And ramparts of strange new dreams to be stormed and won.
Here the five-petaled wild rose blossoms more sweet
Because the earth is barren and the heat
Intolerable for lush, domestic grass;
The ocean shines like many disks of brass,
Or between white hollows it lapses, great and green
Where solitude sifts slowly in between
The hills of sparkling waste and rise and fall—
Hills whose one music is the sea bird's call! . . .
And here is all space that ever eye can see:
The ocean completing all immensity,
And the sky, mother of infinity—
Yet greatness on smallness jostles till both are one
And a grain of sand stands doorkeeper to the sun.

MAX EASTMAN

Max Eastman was born in Canandaigua, New York, January 4, 1883. Both his father and mother had been Congregationalist preachers, so it was natural that the son should turn from scholasticism to a social expression. Eastman received his A.B. at Williams in 1905; from 1907 to 1911 he was Associate Professor in Philosophy at Columbia University. But after the latter part of 1911, he devoted all his time to writing, expressing the problems of economic inequality in a style that was all the firmer for being philosophic. In 1913, he became editor of *The Masses* which, in 1917, changed its name to *The Liberator*.

Child of the Amazons (1913) reveals the lover of quiet beauty as well as the hater of injustice. The best of these poems, with many new ones, were incorporated in *Colors of Life* (1918).

Besides Eastman's poems and essays, he has written one of the most clarifying—and most readable—studies of the period. *Enjoyment of Poetry* (1913) is invaluable as a new kind of textbook; eliminating the usual academic and literary classifications, Eastman accomplishes his object, which is to show that the poetic in everyday perception should not be separated from the poetic in literature. *The Sense of Humor,* a companion volume of analysis, appeared in 1921.

AT THE AQUARIUM

Serene the silver fishes glide,
Stern-lipped, and pale, and wonder-eyed!
As, through the aged deeps of ocean,
They glide with wan and wavy motion.
They have no pathway where they go,
They flow like water to and fro,
They watch with never-winking eyes,
They watch with staring, cold surprise,
The level people in the air,
The people peering, peering there:
Who wander also to and fro,
And know not why or where they go,
Yet have a wonder in their eyes,
Sometimes a pale and cold surprise.

WALLACE STEVENS

Wallace Stevens, born in Pennsylvania, educated there and at Harvard, devoting himself to legal work in Hartford, Connecticut, is a poet of peculiar reticences. His attitude to his work is, in itself, significant. Although most of it appeared in the two best known poetry magazines of the period, *Others* and *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, as early as 1913, it was not until ten years later that Stevens' first book, *Harmonium* (1923), appeared.

The most casual reading of this volume discloses the fact that Stevens is a stylist of unusual delicacy. Even the least sympathetic reader must be struck by the poet's hypersensitive and ingenious imagination. It is a curiously ambiguous world which Stevens paints: a world of merging half-lights, of finicking shadows, of disembodied emotions. Even this last word is an exaggeration, for emotion itself seems absent from the brightly colored segments of the poet's designs. As Llewellyn Powys has written, "Mr. Stevens' poetry is beyond good and evil, beyond hope and despair, beyond thought of any kind, one might almost say."

Considered as a painter, Stevens is one of the most original impressionists of the times. He is fond of little blocks of color, verbal mosaics in which syllables are used as pigments. Little related to any human struggle, the content of *Harmonium* progresses toward a sort of "absolute" poetry which, depending on tone rather than on passion, aims to flower in an air of pure estheticism. His very titles—which deliberately add to the reader's confusion by having little or no connection with most of the poems —betray this quality: "Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," "The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage," "Frogs Eat Butterflies, Snakes Eat Frogs, Hogs Eat Snakes, Men Eat Hogs." Such poems have much for the eye, something for the ear, but little indeed for that central hunger which is at the core of all the senses.

Although Stevens displays an almost childish love of alliteration and assonance, he strikes out many vivid phrases. It is true that what Stevens spreads before us is often less like a canvas and more like a palette. But his exotically splashed lines are alert with witty precisions and his gamut, though limited, is quite his own.

"Sunday Morning" and "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" are a curious blend of disintegrated fantasy and "fictive" or fictitious reality. Superficially obscure, these poems are highly selective in choice of allusions, inner harmonies and special luxuriance of sound; they foliate in a mid-region where the esthetic instinct encroaches on the reasoning intellect. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" and "Domination of Black" have a delicacy of design which suggests the Chinese; "Peter Quince at the Clavier" and the exquisite "To the One of Fictive Music" (Stevens' most obviously musical moment) reveals an elegance which places "this auditor of insects, this lutanist of fleas" as one who has perfected a kind of poetry which is, for all its limitations, a strangely fastidious and hermetic art.

PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER[1]

I

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna:

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[1] Compare the poem on the same theme on page 308.

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green water, clear and warm,
Susanna lay,
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings.
She sighed,
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood
In the cool
Of spent emotions.
She felt, among the leaves,
The dew
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,
Still quavering.
The winds were like her maids
On timid feet,
Fetching her woven scarves,
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand
Muted the night.
She turned—
A cymbal crashed,
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing.
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of Winter, done repenting.
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now, in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

TO THE ONE OF FICTIVE MUSIC

Sister and mother and diviner love,
And of the sisterhood of the living dead
Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,
And of the fragrant mothers the most dear
And queen, and of diviner love the day

And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread
Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown
Its venom of renown, and on your head
No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth
That separates us from the wind and sea,
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,
By being so much of the things we are,
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none
Gives motion to perfection more serene
Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought,
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men
That music is intensest which proclaims
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,
And of all vigils musing the obscure,
That apprehends the most which sees and names,
As in your name, an image that is sure,
Among the arrant spices of the sun,
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
The difference that heavenly pity brings.
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

SUNDAY MORNING

I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug, mingle to dissipate

The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a calm darkens among water-lights.
The pungent oranges and bright green wings
Seem things in some procession of the dead,
Winding across wide water, without sound.
The day is like wide water, without sound,
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,
Dominion of the blood and sepulcher.

II

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries: "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering;
It is the grave of Jesus, where He lay."
We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries:
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

III

She says: "I am content when wakened birds,
Before they fly, test the reality
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"
There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary South, nor cloudy palm

Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped
By consummation of the swallow's wings.

IV

She says, "But in contentment I still feel
The need of some imperishable bliss."
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves
Of sure obliteration on our paths—
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
Whispered a little out of tenderness—
She makes the willow shiver in the sun
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.
She causes boys to bring sweet-smelling pears
And plums in ponderous piles. The maidens taste
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

V

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun—
Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source.
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
The trees, like seraphim, and echoing hills,
That choir among themselves long afterward.
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn—
And whence they came and whither they shall go,
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

DOMINATION OF BLACK

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry—the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.
I felt afraid.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

SEA SURFACE FULL OF CLOUDS

I

In that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And in the morning summer hued the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude
Out of the light evolved the moving blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?
C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme.

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.

II

In that November off Tehuantepec
The slopping of the sea grew still one night.
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck

And made one think of chop-house chocolate
And sham umbrellas. And a sham-like green
Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine

Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay.
Who, then, beheld the rising of the clouds
That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen,

Who saw the mortal massives of the blooms
Of water moving on the water-floor?
C'était mon frère du ciel, ma vie, mon or.

The gongs rang loudly as the windy blooms
Hoo-hooed it in the darkened ocean-blooms.
The gongs grew still. And then blue heaven spread

Its crystalline pendentives on the sea
And the macabre of the water-glooms
In an enormous undulation fled.

III

In that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night,
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

Made one think of porcelain chocolate
And pied umbrellas. An uncertain green,
Piano-polished, held the tranced machine

Of ocean, as a prelude holds and holds.
Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard, then,
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?
Oh! C'était mon extase et mon amour.

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire hue.

IV

In that November off Tehuantepec
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck

And made one think of musky chocolate
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank stratagem.
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds,
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?

Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.
C'était ma foi, la nonchalance divine.

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,
Would— But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

V

In that November off Tehuantepec
Night stilled the slopping of the sea. The day
Came, bowing and voluble, upon the deck,

Good clown. . . . One thought of Chinese chocolate
And large umbrellas. And a motley green
Followed the drift of the obese machine

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.
What pistache one, ingenious and droll,
Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery

And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat
At tossing saucers—cloudy-conjuring sea?
C'était mon esprit batard, l'ignominie.

The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch
Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind
Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue

To clearing opalescence. Then the sea
And heaven rolled as one and from the two
Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

ANNUAL GAIETY

In the morning in the blue snow
The catholic sun, its majesty,
Pinks and pinks the ice-hard melanchole.

Wherefore those prayers to the moon?
Or is it that alligators lie
Along the edges of your eye
Basking in desert Florida?

Père Guzz, in heaven, thumb your lyre
And chant the January fire
And joy of snow and snow.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

William Carlos Williams was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, September 17, 1883, the son of Raquel Ellen Rose Hoheb, born at Mayaguez, Porto Rico, and William George Williams, born in Birmingham, England. Williams was educated at Horace Mann High School, New York, at Geneva, Switzerland, and graduated in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1906. After studying abroad, he returned in 1910 and took up his practice in Rutherford, where he has lived ever since.

As Williams is of mixed Dutch, Jewish and Basque extraction, some of his friends have affected to find these mingled strains in his curiously exotic work. Be this as it may, Williams is one of the most interesting of the left wing of poetic expressionists. *The Tempers,* following an immature *Poems* (1909), was published in London in 1913, a tiny four-inch book which reveals nothing more unusual than youthful uncertainty. *Al Que Quiere* (1917) strikes a more decisive experimental note. From the mocking directions for a funeral which Williams has entitled "Tract" to the more extended "History," Williams achieves a purposely distorted intensification of figure. In *Kora in Hell* (1921) and *Sour Grapes* (1922) Williams seems to be wavering between sharp experiment and the mere exhibition of eccentricities. On one page he paints the scrupulous arrangement of "Queen-Anne's-Lace"; on the next he offers, with cheerful indiscrimination, the flat absurdity of "Complete Destruction."

Although it is difficult to accept Williams in his uncritical entirety, it is ridiculous to reject him, as so many have done, in toto.

Even his wildest records, even the uncontrolled stammerings of the unconscious in *Spring and All* (1923), have an esthetic purpose. Those who have been quick to accuse Williams of charlatanry are those who have never ventured any farther than his disorganized moments and have not glimpsed the strong color and delicate movement of such poems as "Peace on Earth," "Metric Figure" and "Dawn."

Two prose works, *In the American Grain* (1925) and *A Voyage to Pagany* (1928), carry over Williams' stylized distinctiveness into a new *genre* of critical creation.

METRIC FIGURE

There is a bird in the poplars—
It is the sun!
The leaves are little yellow fish
Swimming in the river;
The bird skims above them—
Day is on his wings.
Phoenix!
It is he that is making
The great gleam among the poplars.
It is his singing
Outshines the noise
Of leaves clashing in the wind.

PEACE ON EARTH

The Archer is wake!
The Swan is flying!
Gold against blue
An Arrow is lying.
There is hunting in heaven—
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

The Bears are abroad!
The Eagle is screaming!
Gold against blue
Their eyes are gleaming!
Sleep!
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

The Sisters lie
With their arms intertwining;
Gold against blue
Their hair is shining!
The Serpent writhes!
Orion is listening!
Gold against blue
His sword is glistening!
Sleep!
There is hunting in heaven—
Sleep safe till tomorrow.

DAWN

Ecstatic bird songs pound
the hollow vastness of the sky
with metallic clinkings—
beating color up into it
at a far edge,—beating it, beating it
with rising, triumphant ardor,—
stirring it into warmth,
quickening in it a spreading change,—
bursting wildly against it as
dividing the horizon, a heavy sun
lifts himself—is lifted—
bit by bit above the edge
of things,—runs free at last
out into the open—! lumbering
glorified in full release upward—
songs cease.

POEM

By the road to the contagious hospital,
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast—cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields,
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen,

patches of standing water,
the scattering of tall trees.

All along the road the reddish,
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of brushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish,
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wild-carrot leaf.

One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf,

But now the stark dignity of
entrance— Still, the profound change
has come upon them; rooted, they
grip down and begin to awaken.

ON GAY WALLPAPER

The green-blue ground
is ruled with silver lines
to say the sun is shining

And on this mural sea
of grass or dreams lie flowers
or baskets of desires

Heaven knows what they are
between cerulean shapes
laid regularly round

Mat roses and tridentate
leaves of gold
threes, threes and threes

Three roses and three stems
the basket floating
standing in the horns of blue

Repeated to the ceiling
to the windows
where the day

Blows in
the scalloped curtains to
the sound of rain.

ALFRED KREYMBORG

Alfred Kreymborg was born in New York City, December 10, 1883. His education was spasmodic, his childhood being spent beneath the roar of the elevated trains. At ten he was an expert chess player, devoting practically all his time to a study of the game. Later, he became a bookkeeper and demonstrator of mechanical player-pianos; from seventeen to twenty-five he supported himself by teaching chess and playing exhibition games. His passion, however, was not mathematics but music. He dreamed of extending the borders of poetry into the realms of tonic art, experimented with new systems of notation, technicalities of rhythm. At thirty, he began to turn to the theater as a medium, finding, in this way, fresh contacts that enriched and ripened him.

In 1914, he organized that group of radical poets which, half-deprecatingly, half-defiantly, called itself "Others." (He edited the three anthologies of their work published in 1916, 1917 and 1919.) Meanwhile he had been working on a technique that was an attempt to rid poetry of its too frequent wordiness and rhetorical non-essentials. *Mushrooms* (1916) was the first collection in this vein. Here Kreymborg continually sought for simplification, cutting away at his lines until they assumed an almost naked expression. Often he overdid his effects, attaining nothing more than a false ingenuousness, a sophisticated simplicity. Often, too, he failed to draw the line between what is innocently childlike and what is merely childish.

But Kreymborg, for all harlequin gestures, could do something better than tumble and talk with his tongue in his cheek. An acrobatic fantasy and no little beauty of thought were his when he wanted to use them. Whimsicality and passages of bright color distinguish his *Plays for Poem-Mimes* (1918), as well as the more developed *Plays for Merry Andrews* (1920), in which the principles of modern art are applied to poetry and acting.

Kreymborg's *Blood of Things* (1920) is, for all the surface oddities, the work not only of an apt conjurer but a serious thinker. Humor is in these pages, but it is humor lifted. Here, in spite of what seems a persistence of occasional affectations is a rich and sensitive imagination, a fancy that is as wild as it is quick-witted.

Puppet Plays, with a preface by Gordon Craig, appeared in 1923. Although in its predetermination to preserve an open-eyed wonder, Kreymborg's marionette-like emotions are often too doll-charming or too doll-tragic, these miniature dramas are appealing and witty. However, nothing which Kreymborg had written up to this time had prepared his readers for the volume which appeared a few months later. *Less Lonely* (1923) is not merely Kreymborg's most diverse volume, it is a new Kreymborg. A portion of it is in the idiom which the poet has made his own, but the greater part of the volume is in the shape of conventional verse—the actual form, that is, is conventional although Kreymborg's turn of thought is original. Besides the surprisingly neat quatrains scattered through the three sections, there are couplets that display a delicately personal touch; there are even thirty orthodox sonnets. These simple formalities stood him in good stead in *Funnybone Alley* (1927) which combined quaint prose with city jingles for children. Kreymborg's belated love of the sonnet was, unfortunately, not reciprocated. *The Lost Sail* (1928) is a loose journal in which the sonnets suffer from long drawn-out casualness. The technique is clumsy, the presentation inadequate; worse still, the sentimental note struck tentatively in the early poems is sounded by all the instruments *con amore*. Much of the poet's warmth, his enthusiasms and friendships emanate from this haphazard day-book; if the sonnet-form betrays him into writing without distinction, the subject matter reveals him favorably as a human being. *Manhattan Men* (1929) is a compromise between Kreymborg's first and later manners.

Besides his poetry, Kreymborg is guilty of several premature novels and, during intervals between the founding of various experimental magazines, many prose sketches. *Troubadour* (1925) is his winning autobiography. With the exception of the last few sections which degenerate into mere lists of names and places, this is an intimate record of an artist's quest to establish himself in the midst of a commercial civilization. Direct and unaffected, *Troubadour*, with its pictures of Greenwich Village during the Nineties, reveals Kreymborg no less fully than does his verse.

As a chronicler, Kreymborg is not at all the fantastic recorder one might expect from his verse. *Our Singing Strength* (1929) is a sober categorical outline of American poetry from Colonial times with especial if over-personal emphasis on the contemporary scene.

OLD MANUSCRIPT

The sky
is that beautiful old parchment
in which the sun
and the moon
keep their diary.
To read it all,
one must be a linguist
more learned than Father Wisdom;
and a visionary
more clairvoyant than Mother Dream.
But to feel it,
one must be an apostle:
one who is more than intimate
in having been, always,
the only confidant—
like the earth
or the sea.

DAWNS

I have come
from pride
all the way up to humility
This day-to-night.
The hill
was more terrible
than ever before.
This is the top;
there is the tall, slim tree.
It isn't bent; it doesn't lean;
It is only looking back.
At dawn,
under that tree,
still another me of mine
was buried.
Waiting for me to come again,
humorously solicitous

of what I bring next,
it looks down.

IMPROVISATION

Wind:
Why do you play
that long beautiful adagio,
that archaic air,
tonight.
Will it never end?
Or is it the beginning,
some prelude you seek?

Is it a tale you strum?
Yesterday, yesterday—
Have you no more for us?

Wind:
Play on.
There is nor hope
nor mutiny
in you.

ADVERTISEMENT

We want a man of forty for the job.
One who has enjoyed his little fill of romance.
And suffered intermittent indigestion ever since.
One whose memories are sufficiently cold
  successfully to resist the embraces of truancy.
To whom a mountain
  no longer looms an ideal
  to scramble up and tumble down,
  but is an actual thing made of stone
  bristling with multitudinous edges
  to bark one's shins or break one's neck upon.
To whom a lake or river
  or other body of water
  no longer entices the search for one's likeness
  (we only ask a man to be himself

  and not go diving after phantoms),
  but is a place one might readily drown in,
  one's muscles no longer quite what they were.
Who has achieved
  that ultimate disillusionment:
  not to be able to differentiate
  the respective features, limbs or what not
  of his whilom Graces and Gwendolyns,
  and if he could wouldn't want to,
  would devote the rest of his days to a desk
  piled sky-high with ledgers and cash-books:
Such a man would be certain to stick.
We want such a man for the job.

PEASANT

It's the mixture of peasantry
    makes him so slow.
He waggles his head
    before he speaks,
like a cow
    before she crops.
He bends to the habit
    of dragging his feet
    up under him,
like a measuring-worm:
    some of his forefathers,
    stooped over books,
    ruled short straight lines
    under two rows of figures
    to keep their thin savings
    from sifting to the floor.
Should you strike him
    with a question,
he will blink twice or thrice
    and roll his head about,
like an owl
    in the pin-pricks
    of a dawn he cannot see.
There is mighty little flesh
    about his bones,

there is no gusto
    in his stride:
he seems to wait
    for the blow on the buttocks
    that will drive him
    another step forward—
    step forward to what?
There is no land,
    no house,
    no barn,
he has ever owned;
he sits uncomfortable
    on chairs
    you might invite him to:
if you did,
    he'd keep his hat in hand
    against the moment
    when some silent pause
    for which he hearkens
    with his ear to one side
    bids him move on—
    move on where?
It doesn't matter.
He has learned
    to shrug his shoulders,
    so he'll shrug his shoulders now:
caterpillars do it
    when they're halted by a stick.
Is there a sky overhead?—
    a hope worth flying to?—
Birds may know about it,
    but it's birds
    that birds descend from.

CITY SPARROW

Who's that dusty stranger? What's he doing here?
That city-bred bird with the ill-bred leer?

Perching on branches like telegraph wires?
Chirping his slang about passionate fires?

Poking his head about, twitching his tail,
Getting drunk in our pools as if they were ale?

Never accepting, but stealing our rations?
Acting toward us as he would to relations?

Who asked him hither, what led him this way?
With his critical carping, his mockery, eh?

And worse than all these, he's a jerky reminder
Of winters, of towns, and of people no kinder.

CROCUS

When trees have lost remembrance of the leaves
that spring bequeathes to summer, autumn weaves
and loosens mournfully—this dirge, to whom
does it belong—who treads the hidden loom?

When peaks are overwhelmed with snow and ice,
and clouds with crêpe bedeck and shroud the skies—
nor any sun or moon or star, it seems,
can wedge a path of light through such black dreams—

All motion cold, and dead all trace thereof:
What sudden shock below, or spark above,
starts torrents raging down till rivers surge—
that aid the first small crocus to emerge?

The earth will turn and spin and fairly soar,
that couldn't move a tortoise-foot before—
and planets permeate the atmosphere
till misery depart and mystery clear!—

And yet, so insignificant a hearse?—
who gave it the endurance so to brave
such elements?—shove winter down a grave?—
and then lead on again the universe?

Arturo Giovannitti was born in Abruzzi, Italy, January 7, 1884. He studied at the college of his native province and came to New York when he was eighteen years old. Even as a child Giovannitti had dreamed of America and had "learned upon the knees of his mother and father to reverence, with tears in his eyes, the name of the republic." With the dream of America as the great liberator in his heart, his first impressions were shattering. What he saw, through the eyes of the laborer, were whiplash and legal trickery, the few ruling the many, the miseries and exploitation of the helpless. He thought of becoming a preacher, attended theological school; sought a greater outlet for his passion for democracy and became an editor; lectured, wrote pamphlets and worked continually to express "a multitude of men lost in an immensity of silence."

Although Giovannitti has written several books in Italian, his one English volume is *Arrows in the Gale* (1914). In an eloquent introduction to the poet's rough music, Helen Keller writes, "He makes us feel the presence of toilers behind tenement walls, behind the machinery they guide. . . . He finds voice for his message in the sighs, the dumb hopes, the agonies and thwartings of men who are bowed and broken by the monster hands of machines."

Several of Giovannitti's poems are in rhyme, but his most characteristic lines move in uplifted prose poems that shape themselves vividly to their subjects. "The Cage," with its restrained anger, and "The Walker" are typical. "The Walker," unfortunately too long to quote in its entirety, is remarkable, not only as an artwork, but as a document; it is a twentieth-century "Ballad of Reading Gaol," with an intensity and social power of which Wilde was incapable.

FROM "THE WALKER"

I hear footsteps over my head all night.
They come and they go. Again they come and they go all night.
They come one eternity in four paces and they go one eternity in four paces, and between the coming and the going there is Silence and the Night and the Infinite.
For infinite are the nine feet of a prison cell, and endless is the march of him who walks between the yellow brick wall and the red iron gate, thinking things that cannot be chained and cannot be locked, but that wander far away

in the sunlit world, each in a wild pilgrimage after a destined goal.

. . . .

Throughout the restless night I hear the footsteps over my head.
Who walks? I know not. It is the phantom of the jail, the sleepless brain, a man, the man, the Walker.
One-two-three-four: four paces and the wall.
One-two-three-four: four paces and the iron gate.
He has measured his space, he has measured it accurately, scrupulously, minutely, as the hangman measures the rope and the gravedigger the coffin—so many feet, so many inches, so many fractions of an inch for each of the four paces.
One-two-three-four. Each step sounds heavy and hollow over my head, and the echo of each step sounds hollow within my head as I count them in suspense and in dread that once, perhaps, in the endless walk, there may be five steps instead of four between the yellow brick wall and the red iron gate.
But he has measured the space so accurately, so scrupulously, so minutely that nothing breaks the grave rhythm of the slow, fantastic march.

. . . .

All through the night he walks and he thinks.
Is it more frightful because he walks and his footsteps sound hollow over my head, or because he thinks and speaks not his thoughts?
But does he think? Why should he think? Do I think? I only hear the footsteps and count them. Four steps and the wall. Four steps and the gate. But beyond? Beyond? Where goes he beyond the gate and the wall?
He goes not beyond. His thought breaks there on the iron gate. Perhaps it breaks like a wave of rage, perhaps like a sudden flow of hope, but it always returns to beat the wall like a billow of helplessness and despair.
He walks to and fro within the narrow whirlpit of this ever storming and furious thought. Only one thought—constant, fixed, immovable, sinister, without power and without voice.

A thought of madness, frenzy, agony and despair, a hell-brewed thought, for it is a natural thought. All things natural are things impossible while there are jails in the world—bread, work, happiness, peace, love.
But he thinks not of this. As he walks he thinks of the most superhuman, the most unattainable, the most impossible thing in the world:
He thinks of a small brass key that turns just half around and throws open the red iron gate.

. . . .

That is all the Walker thinks, as he walks throughout the night.
And that is what two hundred minds drowned in the darkness and silence of the night think, and that is also what I think.
Wonderful is the supreme wisdom of the jail that makes all think the same thought. Marvelous is the providence of the law that equalizes all, even in mind and sentiment. Fallen is the last barrier of privilege, the aristocracy of the intellect. The democracy of reason has leveled all the two hundred minds to the common surface of the same thought.
I, who have never killed, think like the murderer;
I, who have never stolen, reason like the thief;
I think, reason, hope, doubt, wait like the hired assassin, the embezzler, the forger, the counterfeiter, the incestuous, the raper, the drunkard, the prostitute, the pimp—I, I who used to think of love and life and flowers and song and beauty and the ideal.
A little key, a little key as little as my little finger, a little key of shining brass.
All my ideas, my thoughts, my dreams are congealed in a little key of shiny brass. . . .

WILBERT SNOW

Wilbert Snow was born April 6, 1884, on White Head Island, off the coast of Maine. His early years were spent in his own state; he became, at various times, a lobster-catcher, a deep-sea fisherman, a sailor, a country school teacher (all in Maine), an Eskimo-

and reindeer-agent for the Department of the Interior in Alaska. Graduating from Bowdoin College in 1907, he obtained his M.A. at Columbia University in 1910 and taught English subsequently at seven American colleges.

Maine Coast (1923) and *The Inner Harbor* (1926) manifest Snow's obvious though perhaps unconscious debt to Robert Frost. But beneath the derivations there is much that comes straight from Snow's own experience and observation. In connection with the poems here reprinted, a reading of "Advice to a Clam-Digger" and "A Northeaster" reveals this poet's background and gives a more complete presentation of his characteristics.

TAKING AWAY THE BANKING

When March winds carried prophecies of June,
And gray days were no longer winter-killed,
We all went out and worked till afternoon
To take the spruce-limb banking off, and filled
The air with shouts, heaping what soon would be
A bonfire blazing by the willow-tree.

We tugged at big ends of the bottom brush,
The small ends as reluctant to let go
As winter was himself, although the rush
Of warmth, once started, was an overflow
Of sunny days, blue-birds, and brooklets racing
Like children from worn mothers, tired of chasing.

We found that spring already underneath
Had started on his work; the light-blown grasses
Were flaunting spots of green, the little teeth
Of mice and snouts of worms had chiseled passes—
Worms we sent wiggling as a tempting cud
For hungry flounders coming out of mud.

O, there were ugly days enough to come,
With rain and sleet and April fluffs of snow,
Big winds that moaned and made the wires hum,
And neighbors calling out, "We told you so!"
But looking on it now I think the days
We coaxed the spring along, and felt the rays

Of March intensify the balsam smell
In those green boughs, and saw the underpinning
Exposed once more, and children run pellmell
To hunt for crocuses, set fancies spinning
More rapidly than blooming hours of May
When all the hills of God kept holiday.

JANUARY THAW

Noon, and the tall black trees
That lean on the frozen river
Shed drops too mild to freeze
Though the sun seems gone forever.

Elm-tops melt in the mist,
The gray-white mist that throws
A mantle of amethyst
As far as the sky-line goes.

A melting that helps to trace
On patches of smooth blue ice
Contours of motley grace
In the road-bed's fall and rise.

Contours I will not break,
But will drive far out around,
That beauty may not forsake
This cold, hard ground.

EUNICE TIETJENS

Eunice (Strong Hammond) Tietjens was born in Chicago, Illinois, July 29, 1884. When fourteen, she made the first of many trips to Europe, remaining there for seven years. She married Paul Tietjens, the composer, in 1904. During 1914 and 1916 she was Associate Editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* and went to France as war correspondent of the Chicago *Daily News* (1917-18). Her second marriage (to Cloyd Head, the writer) occurred in February, 1920.

Profiles from China (1917) is a series of sketches of people, scenes and incidents observed in the interior during two years' sojourn. Written in fluent free verse, the poems in this collection are alive with color and personality. The succeeding *Body and Raiment* (1919) is less integrated, more derivative and diffuse. Yet, in spite of certain obvious echoes, individual poems like "The Drug Clerk," "The Steam Shovel" and a few others are worthy to stand beside her first volume.

Profiles from Home (1925) attempts to do for the United States what Mrs. Tietjens' first volume did for China. It is, unfortunately, as disappointing as its predecessor was distinguished. *Profiles from Home* contains a few interesting sardonic commentaries; as poetry it is dull, never rising above a pedestrian level. *Leaves in Windy Weather* (1929), a miscellaneous collection, lacks the unity but recaptures the integrity of her early work.

Poetry of the Orient (1928) is a large anthology of the classic secular verse of the major Eastern nations smoothly and sometimes memorably paraphrased.

THE MOST-SACRED MOUNTAIN

Space, and the twelve clean winds of heaven,
And this sharp exultation, like a cry, after the slow six thousand steps of climbing!
This is Tai Shan, the beautiful, the most holy.

Below my feet the foot-hills nestle, brown with flecks of green; and lower down the flat brown plain, the floor of earth, stretches away to blue infinity.
Beside me in this airy space the temple roofs cut their slow curves against the sky,
And one black bird circles above the void.

Space, and the twelve clean winds are here;
And with them broods eternity—a swift, white peace, a presence manifest.
The rhythm ceases here. Time has no place. This is the end that has no end.

Here when Confucius came, a half a thousand years before the Nazarene, he stepped, with me, thus into timelessness.
The stone beside us waxes old, the carven stone that says: *On this spot once Confucius stood and felt the smallness of the world below.*

The stone grows old.
Eternity
Is not for stones.
But I shall go down from this airy space, this swift white peace, this stinging exultation;
And time will close about me, and my soul stir to the rhythm of the daily round.
Yet, having known, life will not press so close,
And always I shall feel time ravel thin about me.
For once I stood
In the white windy presence of eternity.

THE DRUG CLERK

The drug clerk stands behind the counter
Young and dapper and debonair. . . .

Before him burn the great unwinking lights,
The hectic stars of city nights,
Red as hell's pit, green as a mermaid's hair.
A queer half-acrid smell is in the air.
Behind him on the shelves in ordered rows
With strange, abbreviated names
Dwell half the facts of life. That young man knows
Bottled and boxed and powdered here,
Dumb tragedies, deceptions, secret shames,
And comedy and fear.

Sleep slumbers here, like a great quiet sea
Shrunk to this bottle's compass; sleep that brings
Sweet respite from the teeth of pain
To those poor tossing things
That the white nurses watch so thoughtfully.
And here again
Dwell the shy souls of Maytime flowers
That shall make sweeter still those poignant hours
When wide-eyed youth looks on the face of love.
And, for those others who have found too late
The bitter fruits thereof,
Here are cosmetics, powders, paints,—the arts
That hunted women use to hunt again

With scented flesh for bait.
And here is comfort for the hearts
Of sucking babes in their first teething pain.
Here dwells the substance of huge fervid dreams,
Fantastic, many-colored, shot with gleams
Of ecstasy and madness, that shall come
To some pale, twitching sleeper in a bunk.
And here is courage, cheaply bought
To cure a blue sick funk,
And dearly paid for in the final sum.
Here in this powdered fly is caught
Desire more ravishing than Tarquin's rape
And bloody-handed murder. And at last
When the one weary hope is past
Here is the sole escape,
The little postern in the house of breath
Where pallid fugitives keep tryst with death.

All this the drug clerk knows and there he stands,
Young and dapper and debonair. . . .
He rests a pair of slender hands,
Much manicured, upon the counter there
And speaks: "No, we don't carry no pomade,
We only cater to the high-class trade."

SARA TEASDALE

Sara Teasdale was born August 8, 1884, in St. Louis, Missouri, and educated there. After leaving school she traveled in Europe and the Near East, married, and moved to New York in 1916. Living in seclusion, she died there suddenly January 28, 1933.

Her first book was a slight volume, *Sonnets to Duse* (1907), giving little promise of the lyricism to follow. *Helen of Troy and Other Poems* (1911) contains the first hints of that delicate craftsmanship which this poet brought to such a high pitch. The six monologues which open the volume are written in a blank verse as musical as many of her lyrics. At times her quatrains suffer from too conscious a cleverness; the dexterity with which Miss Teasdale turns a phrase or twists her last line is frequently too obtrusive to be unreservedly enjoyable.

Rivers to the Sea (1915) emphasizes this epigrammatic skill, but a greater restraint is here. The new collection contains at least a dozen unforgettable snatches, lyrics in which the words seem to fall into place without art or effort. Seldom employing metaphor or striking imagery, almost bare of ornament, these poems have the magic of folk-song. Theirs is an artlessness that is something more than an art.

Love Songs (1917) is a collection of Miss Teasdale's previous melodies for the *viola d'amore* together with several in which the turns are no longer obviously unexpected. The new poems emphasize a sensitivity achieved without verbal subtleties. They also emphasize their superiority to the earlier love lyrics that were written in a mood of literary romance, of artificial roses, languishing lutes, moonlit balconies, passionate guitars—a mood that was less careless than cultivated.

Flame and Shadow (1920; revised edition, published in England, in 1924) is the ripest of her books. Here the emotion is fuller and deeper; an almost mystic radiance plays from these verses. Technically, also, this volume marks Miss Teasdale's greatest advance. The words are chosen with a keener sense of their actual as well as their musical values; the rhythms are much more subtle and varied; the line moves with a greater naturalness. Beneath the symbolism of poems like "Water Lilies," "The Long Hill," and "Let It Be Forgotten," one is conscious of a finer artistry, a more flexible speech that is all the lovelier for its slight (and logical) irregularities.

After *Flame and Shadow* Miss Teasdale's theme became somewhat autumnal. Though never funereal, the songs are preoccupied with the coming of age, the gathering of night, the mutability of things. *Dark of the Moon* (1926) is more thoughtful than any other previous verse. It is, as the title indicates, even more somber. If the movement is slower it is a no less delicate music that moves under the surface rhythms. "Wisdom," "The Solitary," "The Flight" may not be the most popular poems that Miss Teasdale has written, but they must be numbered among her best. Hers is a disillusion without cynicism; her proud acceptance of life's darker aspects adds new dignity to the old lyricism.

Besides her own books, Miss Teasdale has compiled an anthology, *The Answering Voice* (1917), comprising one hundred love lyrics by women, and a collection for children, *Rainbow Gold* (1922).

NIGHT SONG AT AMALFI

I asked the heaven of stars
   What I should give my love—
It answered me with silence,
   Silence above.

I asked the darkened sea
Down where the fishermen go—
It answered me with silence,
Silence below.

Oh, I could give him weeping,
Or I could give him song—
But how can I give silence
My whole life long?

SPRING NIGHT

The park is filled with night and fog,
The veils are drawn about the world,
The drowsy lights along the paths
Are dim and pearled.

Gold and gleaming the empty streets,
Gold and gleaming the misty lake,
The mirrored lights like sunken swords,
Glimmer and shake.

Oh, is it not enough to be
Here with this beauty over me?
My throat should ache with praise, and I
Should kneel in joy beneath the sky.
O beauty, are you not enough?
Why am I crying after love
With youth, a singing voice, and eyes
To take earth's wonder with surprise?
Why have I put off my pride,
Why am I unsatisfied,—
I, for whom the pensive night
Binds her cloudy hair with light,—
I, for whom all beauty burns
Like incense in a million urns?
O beauty, are you not enough?
Why am I crying after love?

I SHALL NOT CARE

When I am dead and over me bright April
Shakes out her rain-drenched hair,
Though you should lean above me broken-hearted,
I shall not care.

I shall have peace, as leafy trees are peaceful
When rain bends down the bough;
And I shall be more silent and cold-hearted
Than you are now.

THE LONG HILL

I must have passed the crest a while ago
And now I am going down—
Strange to have crossed the crest and not to know,
But the brambles were always catching the hem of my gown.

All the morning I thought how proud I should be
To stand there straight as a queen,
Wrapped in the wind and the sun with the world under me—
But the air was dull, there was little I could have seen.

It was nearly level along the beaten track
And the brambles caught in my gown—
But it's no use now to think of turning back,
The rest of the way will be only going down.

WATER-LILIES

If you have forgotten water-lilies floating
On a dark lake among mountains in the afternoon shade,
If you have forgotten their wet, sleepy fragrance,
Then you can return and not be afraid.

But if you remember, then turn away forever
To the plains and the prairies where pools are far apart,
There you will not come at dusk on closing water-lilies,
And the shadow of mountains will not fall on your heart.

"LET IT BE FORGOTTEN"

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold,
Let it be forgotten for ever and ever,
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If any one asks, say it was forgotten
Long and long ago,
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall
In a long-forgotten snow.

WISDOM

It was a night of early spring,
The winter-sleep was scarcely broken;
Around us shadows and the wind
Listened for what was never spoken.

Though half a score of years are gone,
Spring comes as sharply now as then—
But if we had it all to do
It would be done the same again.

It was a spring that never came;
But we have lived enough to know
That what we never have, remains;
It is the things we have that go.

THE SOLITARY

My heart has grown rich with the passing of years,
I have less need now than when I was young
To share myself with every comer,
Or shape my thoughts into words with my tongue.

It is one to me that they come or go
If I have myself and the drive of my will,
And strength to climb on a summer night
And watch the stars swarm over the hill.

Let them think I love them more than I do,
Let them think I care, though I go alone,
If it lifts their pride, what is it to me,
Who am self-complete as a flower or a stone?

THE CRYSTAL GAZER

I shall gather myself into myself again,
I shall take my scattered selves and make them one,
I shall fuse them into a polished crystal ball
Where I can see the moon and the flashing sun.

I shall sit like a sibyl, hour after hour intent,
Watching the future come and the present go—
And the little shifting pictures of people rushing
In tiny self-importance to and fro.

APPRAISAL

Never think she loves him wholly,
Never believe her love is blind,
All his faults are locked securely
In a closet of her mind;
All his indecisions folded
Like old flags that time has faded,
Limp and streaked with rain,
And his cautiousness like garments
Frayed and thin, with many a stain—
Let them be, oh, let them be,
There is treasure to outweigh them,
His proud will that sharply stirred,
Climbs as surely as the tide,
Senses strained too taut to sleep,
Gentleness to beast and bird,
Humor flickering hushed and wide
As the moon on moving water,
And a tenderness too deep
To be gathered in a word.

ON THE SOUTH DOWNS

Over the downs there were birds flying,
Far off glittered the sea,
And toward the north the weald of Sussex
Lay like a kingdom under me.

I was happier than the larks
That nest on the downs and sing to the sky—
Over the downs the birds flying
Were not so happy as I.

It was not you, though you were near,
Though you were good to hear and see;
It was not earth, it was not heaven,
It was myself that sang in me.

AUGUST NIGHT

On a midsummer night, on a night that was eerie with stars,
In a wood too deep for a single star to look through,
You led down a path whose turnings you knew in the darkness,
But the scent of the dew-dripping cedars was all that I knew.

I drank of the darkness, I was fed with the honey of fragrance,
I was glad of my life, the drawing of breath was sweet;
I heard your voice, you said, "Look down, see the glow-worm!"
It was there before me, a small star white at my feet.

We watched while it brightened as though it were breathed on and burning,
This tiny creature moving over earth's floor—
"'*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle,*'"
You said, and no more.

EFFIGY OF A NUN

(*Sixteenth Century*)

Infinite gentleness, infinite irony
Are in this face with fast-sealed eyes,
And round this mouth that learned in loneliness
How useless their wisdom is to the wise.

In her nun's habit carved, patiently, lovingly,
  By one who knew the ways of womankind,
This woman's face still keeps, in its cold wistful calm,
  All of the subtle pride of her mind.

These long patrician hands, clasping the crucifix,
  Show she had weighed the world, her will was set;
These pale curved lips of hers, holding their hidden smile
  Once having made their choice, knew no regret.

She was of those who hoard their own thoughts carefully,
  Feeling them far too dear to give away,
Content to look at life with the high, insolent
  Air of an audience watching a play.

If she was curious, if she was passionate
  She must have told herself that love was great,
But that the lacking it might be as great a thing
  If she held fast to it, challenging fate.

She who so loved herself and her own warring thoughts,
  Watching their humorous, tragic rebound,
In her thick habit's fold, sleeping, sleeping,
  Is she amused at dreams she has found?

Infinite tenderness, infinite irony
  Are hidden forever in her closed eyes,
Who must have learned too well in her long loneliness
  How empty wisdom is, even to the wise.

THE FLIGHT

We are two eagles
Flying together,
Under the heavens,
Over the mountains,
Stretched on the wind.
Sunlight heartens us,
Blind snow baffles us,
Clouds wheel after us,
Raveled and thinned.

We are like eagles;
But when Death harries us,
Human and humbled
When one of us goes,
Let the other follow—
Let the flight be ended,
Let the fire blacken,
Let the book close.

MARGARET WIDDEMER

Margaret Widdemer was born at Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and began writing in her childhood. After graduating from Drexel Institute Library School in 1909, she contributed to various magazines.

Miss Widdemer's poetic work has two distinct phases. In the one mood, she is the protesting poet, the champion of the downtrodden, the lyricist on fire with angry passion. In the other, she is the writer of well-made, polite and popular sentimental verse. Her early poems are in *Factories with Other Lyrics* (1915); more quotable songs are in *The Old Road to Paradise* (1918), which divided, with Sandburg's *Cornhuskers,* the Pulitzer Poetry Prize in 1918. *Cross Currents* (1921) and *Ballads and Lyrics* (1925) are her most recent collections. *The Singing Wood* is a poetic play and *A Tree with a Bird in It* won the *Literary Review* prize for satires in 1923.

Miss Widdemer is also the author of three books of short stories, six novels and several books for girls.

FACTORIES

I have shut my little sister in from life and light
  (For a rose, for a ribbon, for a wreath across my hair),
I have made her restless feet still until the night,
  Locked from sweets of summer and from wild spring air;
I who ranged the meadowlands, free from sun to sun,
  Free to sing and pull the buds and watch the far wings fly,
I have bound my sister till her playing time was done—
  Oh, my little sister, was it I? Was it I?

I have robbed my sister of her day of maidenhood
  (For a robe, for a feather, for a trinket's restless spark),
Shut from love till dusk shall fall, how shall she know good,
  How shall she go scatheless through the sun-lit dark?

I who could be innocent, I who could be gay,
  I who could have love and mirth before the light went by,
I have put my sister in her mating-time away—
  Sister, my young sister, was it I? Was it I?

I have robbed my sister of the lips against her breast,
  (For a coin, for the weaving of my children's lace and lawn),
Feet that pace beside the loom, hands that cannot rest—
  How can she know motherhood, whose strength is gone?
I who took no heed of her, starved and labor-worn,
  I, against whose placid heart my sleepy gold-heads lie,
Round my path they cry to me, little souls unborn—
  God of Life! Creator! It was I! It was I!

DuBOSE HEYWARD

DuBose Heyward was born in Charleston, South Carolina, August 31, 1885, of English and French Huguenot stock. He was educated in his native state, and has lived there most of his life, spending part of the time in Charleston and the remainder in the North Carolina mountains.

His first volume, *Carolina Chansons* (1922), was written in collaboration with Hervey Allen. It is a laudable experiment, an effort to reproduce the haunted atmosphere of that part of the South which these two poets represent. *Skylines and Horizons* (1924) continues if it does not quite fulfill the promise of Heyward's first offering. Though less self-consciously autochthonous, it is no less redolent of the spirit of the South. The contents range from the misty evocations of the Low Country to the primitive strength of the cycle written in the Great Smokies, of which "A Yoke of Steers" is an example.

Though Heyward began as a writer of verse, his popularity rests on his more accurate prose. *Porgy* (1925) was one of the most successful works of the decade, having made an instantaneous appeal as a novel and, two years later, as a play. *Mamba's Daughters* (1929) is, like *Porgy*, an interpretation as well as a picture of Negro life, an achievement in color and contrasts on a larger scale.

A YOKE OF STEERS

A heave of mighty shoulders to the yoke,
Square, patient heads, and flaring sweep of horn;
The darkness swirling down beneath their feet
Where sleeping valleys stir, and feel the dawn;

Uncouth and primal, on and up they sway,
Taking the summit in a drench of day.
The night-winds volley upward bitter-sweet,
And the dew shatters to a rainbow spray
Under the slow-moving, cloven feet.

There is a power here that grips the mind;
A force repressed and inarticulate,
Slow as the swing of centuries, as blind
As destiny, and as deliberate.

They will arrive in their appointed hour
Unhurried by the goad of lesser wills,
Bearing vast burdens on.
They are the great
Unconquerable spirit of these hills.

GLADYS CROMWELL

Gladys Cromwell was born November 28, 1885, in New York City. She was educated in New York private schools and lived abroad a great deal. "Her life," writes Anne Dunn, "was little indented by outer events, being wholly of the mind and spirit." She was most at home in the world within herself, sensitive and —to the final, tragic degree—self-effacing.

In January, 1918, Gladys and Dorothea, her twin-sister, enrolled in the Canteen Service of the Red Cross, sailed for France and were stationed at Châlons. Both girls worked unremittingly for eight months. It was only at the end of their desperate labors that they gave way to hopelessness, believing their efforts futile and the whole world desolate. Signs of a mental breakdown occur in their diaries as early as October. "After the armistice," writes Anne Dunn in her biographical note which serves as an epilogue to Gladys Cromwell's *Poems*, "they showed symptoms of nervous prostration; but years of self-control and consideration for others made them conceal the black horror in which they lived, the agony through which they saw a world which, they felt, contained no refuge for beauty or quiet thought. And when, on their way home, they jumped from the deck of the *Lorraine* it was in response to a vision that promised them fulfillment and peace." After their death, which occurred January 19, 1919, the French Government awarded the two sisters the Croix de Guerre.

Gates of Utterance (1915) has something more than the usual "promise." But the best of Miss Cromwell's work can be found in her posthumously published *Poems* (1919), which, in 1920, received the yearly prize offered by the Poetry Society of America, dividing the honor with Neihardt's *The Song of Three Friends.* Gladys Cromwell's most significant poems betray that attitude to life which was at the heart of her tragedy—a preoccupation that was a mixture of fascination and fear. Her lines, never mediocre, are introspective and taut with serious concern. A few of her delicate songs, like the two lyrics quoted, tremble on the verge of something great just beyond the power of achievement.

THE CROWNING GIFT

I have had courage to accuse;
And a fine wit that could upbraid;
And a nice cunning that could bruise;
And a shrewd wisdom, unafraid
Of what weak mortals fear to lose.

I have had virtue to despise
The sophistry of pious fools;
I have had firmness to chastise;
And intellect to make me rules
To estimate and exorcise.

I have had knowledge to be true;
My faith could obstacles remove;
But now my frailty I endue.
I would have courage now to love,
And lay aside the strength I knew.

THE MOULD

No doubt this active will,
So bravely steeped in sun,
This will has vanquished death
And foiled oblivion.

But this indifferent clay,
This fine, experienced hand
So quiet, and these thoughts
That all unfinished stand,

Feel death as though it were
A shadowy caress;
And win and wear a frail
Archaic wistfulness.

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS

Elizabeth Madox Roberts was born in 1885, at Perryville, near Springfield, Kentucky, and attended the University of Chicago, where she received her Ph.B. in 1921. Except when obliged to travel for health or warmth, she lives in the Salt River country of Kentucky, twenty-eight miles from Harrodsburg, old Fort Harrod, the first settlement in the state.

As an undergraduate she won the local Fiske Prize with a group of poems which later appeared in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.* An amplification of these verses appeared as *Under the Tree* (1922) and critics were quick to recognize the unusually fresh accents in this first volume. *Under the Tree* spoke directly to the young, for it was written, not so much for children, but as a child—an alert and sensitive child—would write. The observation is precise, the reflections are candidly clear, the humor delicate, never simpering or archly beribboned. Here is a simplicity which is straight-forward without being shrill or (as so many grown-up records of childhood are) mincing. The verse is graceful where grace commands the gesture, but Miss Roberts' unforced *naïveté* allows her to be gauche whenever awkwardness is natural.

After this volume Miss Roberts returned to her native state, spending much of her time studying the archaic English speech still spoken in the remote parts of Kentucky. "Orpheus," although written later than her first book, is a highly interesting use of her early idiom, localizing as well as vitalizing the old myth. "Stranger" is more definitely indigenous; it has something of the flavor of the *Lonesome Tunes* collected by Howard Brockway and Loraine Wyman. Concerning this poem, Miss Roberts writes, "In these verses I have used material from the old ballads—or suggestions from them, material which may be found abundantly in Kentucky, together with modern syncopation and a refrain designed to call up banjo notes." "A Ballet Song of Mary," which won the John Reed Memorial Prize in *Poetry* (1928) is an "artificial" piece—using the adjective in the best sense—founded on ancient archaic words and uses. Here, as in her prose, Miss Roberts writes with an ear always tuned to local phrase and feeling.

In 1925 Miss Roberts turned to the prose for which she has been so widely celebrated. *The Time of Man* (1926), one of the most moving novels of the period, is an epic of the Appalachians in which every chapter has the effect of a poem. *My Heart and My Flesh* (1927), a darker and more difficult exploration, discloses less local and more universal regions of the spirit. *Jingling in the Wind* (1928) is a less successful experiment, a light farce which tries but fails to be a satire on industrial civilization. All three are characterized by a grace and difference which set Miss Roberts apart from the competent writers of easy fictions.

The Great Meadow (1930) is an exploration of the material uncovered in her first novel. Placed in the Kentucky meadow-lands against the heroic backgrounds of early American history, it is a pioneering panorama. Native to the least grass-blade, it is much more than a narrative of the soil; it is a widening poem of the men and women who imposed themselves and their pattern on the unshaped wilderness. Thus *The Great Meadow* acts both as the preparation for and the rich completion of *The Time of Man.*

THE SKY

I saw a shadow on the ground
And heard a bluejay going by;
A shadow went across the ground,
And I looked up and saw the sky.

It hung up on the poplar tree,
But while I looked it did not stay;
It gave a tiny sort of jerk
And moved a little bit away.

And farther on and farther on
It moved and never seemed to stop.
I think it must be tied with chains
And something pulls it from the top.

It never has come down again,
And every time I look to see,
The sky is always slipping back
And getting far away from me.

CHRISTMAS MORNING

If Bethlehem were here today,
Or this were very long ago,
There wouldn't be a winter time
Nor any cold or snow.

I'd run out through the garden gate,
And down along the pasture walk;
And off beside the cattle barns
I'd hear a kind of gentle talk.

I'd move the heavy iron chain
And pull away the wooden pin;
I'd push the door a little bit
And tiptoe very softly in.

The pigeons and the yellow hens
And all the cows would stand away;
Their eyes would open wide to see
A lady in the manger hay,
If this were very long ago
And Bethlehem were here today.

And Mother held my hand and smiled—
I mean the lady would—and she
Would take the woolly blankets off
Her little boy so I could see.

His shut-up eyes would be asleep,
And he would look just like our John,
And he would be all crumpled too,
And have a pinkish color on.

I'd watch his breath go in and out.
His little clothes would all be white.
I'd slip my finger in his hand
To feel how he could hold it tight.

And she would smile and say, "Take care,"
The mother, Mary, would, "Take care";
And I would kiss his little hand
And touch his hair.

While Mary put the blankets back
The gentle talk would soon begin.
And when I'd tiptoe softly out
I'd meet the wise men going in.

ORPHEUS[1]

He could sing sweetly on a string.
He'd make the music curve around;
He'd make it tremble through the woods
And all the trees would leave the ground.

The tunes would walk on steps of air,
For in his hand a wire would sing;
The songs would fly like wild quick geese—
He could play sweetly on a string.

. . . . .

If Orpheus would come today,
Our trees would lean far out to hear,
And they would stretch limb after limb;
Then the ellum trees would leave the ground,
And the sycamores would follow him.

And the poplar tree and the locust tree
And the coffeeberry tree would come
And all the rows of osage thorns,
And then the little twisted plum.

He'd lead them off across the hill.
They'd flow like water toward his feet.
He'd walk through fields and turn in roads;
He'd bring them down our street.

And he'd go by the blacksmith shop,
And one would say, "Now who are these?—
I wonder who that fellow is,
And where he's going with the trees!"

"To the sawmill, likely," one would say,
"Oh, yes, the sawmill, I should think."
And then he'd cut the horse's hoof
And hammers would go *clink* and *clink*.

. . . . .

He could play sweetly on a wire.

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[1] It is interesting to compare this localized version of the mythical wandering poet with H. Phelps Putnam's treatment of a like theme in "Ballad of a Strange Thing" on page 696.

And he would lean down near his lyre
To hear its songs unfold and wind,
And it would reach up toward his ear
To hear the music in his mind.

And when the road turned by the kiln,
Then Orpheus would happen to see
The little plum and the sycamore
And the poplar tree and the chinaberry tree,

And all the rows of osage thorns—
When he happened once to look—
He'd see them coming after him . . .
Three birches, and he'd see the oak.

And he would lead them back again.
He'd bring each one to its own ground.
He'd bring each to its growing-place
And set them back with sound and sound.

He'd fit them in with whispered chords,
And tap them down with humming words.

STRANGER

When Polly lived back in the old deep woods,
Sing, sing, sing and howdy, howdy-o!
Nobody ever went by her door,
Tum a-tum tum and danky, danky-o!

Valentine worked all day in the brush,
He grubbed out stumps and he chopped with his ax,
He chopped a clear road up out of the branch;
Their wheels made all the tracks.

And all they could see out doors were the trees,
And all the night they could hear the wolves go;
But one cold time when the dark came on
A man's voice said, "Hello, there, hello!"

He stood away by the black oak tree
When they opened the door in the halfway light;
He stood away by the buttonwood stump,
And Valentine said, "Won't you stay all night?"

He sat by the fire and warmed his bones.
He had something hidden down deep in a sack,
And Polly watched close while she baked her pones;
He felt of it once when she turned her back—
Polly had a fear of his sack.

Nobody lived this way or there,
And the night came down and the woods came dark,
A thin man sat by the fire that night,
And the cabin pane was one red spark.

He took the something out of his sack,
When the candle dimmed and the logs fell low,
It was something dark, as Polly could see,
Sing, sing, sing and howdy, howdy-o!

He held it up against his chest,
And the logs came bright with a fresh new glow,
And it was a fiddle that was on his breast,
Tum tum-a tum and danky, danky-o!

He played one tune and one tune more;
He played five tunes all in a long row.
The logs never heard any songs before.
Sing, sing, sing and howdy, howdy-o!

The tunes lay down like drowsy cats;
They tumbled over rocks where the waterfalls go;
They twinkled in the sun like little June gnats;
Tum a-tum tum and danky dee-o!

The stumps stood back in Valentine's mind;
The wolves went back so Polly couldn't see;
She forgot how they howled and forgot how they whined.
Tum tum a-tum and danky-dee!

The tunes flew by like wild quick geese,
Sing, sing, sing and howdy howdy-o!
And Polly said, "That's a right good piece."
Tum tum tum and danky danky-o!
Tum a-tum tum and danky dee-o!

A BALLET SONG OF MARY

Her smock was of the holland fine,
Skinkled with colors three;
Her shawl was of the velvet blue,
The Queen of Galilee.

Her hair was yellow like the wex,
Like the silken floss fine-spun;
The girdle for her golden cloak
Was all in gold bedone.

She sat her down in her own bower place
And dressed herself her hair.
Her gold kemb in her braid she laid,
And a sound fell on the door.

He came within her own bower room
"Hail, Mary, hail!" says he;
"A goodly grace is on your head,
For the Lord is now with thee."

She folded down her little white hands
When Gabriel spoke again.
She set her shawl, the corners right,
For ceremony then.

"And the God will overshadow thee
And bring a holy sweven.
Fear not, fear not," then Gabriel said,
"It's the God of the good high heaven.

"And what must be born it will heal the sick;
It will make a goodly lear;
It will fettle men for christentie
And to keep holy gear."

Then up then rose this little maid
When Gabriel's word was said,
And out of the bower she ran in haste,
And out of the hall she is sped.

She is running far to Zachary's house—
"Is this the way?" says she.
"A little maid in haste," they said,
"Has gone to the hills of Judee."

And what will be born it will ope their eyes;
It will hearten men in their stear;
It will fettle men for christentie
And to have holy gear.

It will scourge with a thong when those make gain
Where a humble man should be;
It will cast the witches from out of his saule
And drown them into the sea.

It will give men drink from the horn of the wind,
And give men meat from the song of a bird;
Their cloak they will get from the sheen of the grass,
And a roof from a singin' word.

And when they come to the Brig o' Dread,
And they cry, "I fall! I'm afear!"
It will close their eyes and give them sleep
To heal them outen their lonesome cheer,
When they come to the Brig o' Dread.

EZRA POUND

Ezra (Loomis) Pound was born at Hailey, Idaho, October 30, 1885, and entered the University of Pennsylvania at the age of fifteen. At sixteen, unbeknown to the faculty, he began studying comparative literature; before he was seventeen (in 1902) he enrolled as special student "to avoid irrelevant subjects." He continued the process at Hamilton College (1903-5) and from 1905 to 1907 was "Instructor with professorial functions" at the University of Pennsylvania. His next move brought him to Crawfordsville, Indiana—" 'the Athens of the West,' a town with literary traditions, Lew Wallace having died there." Pound was dismissed from Wabash College after four months—"all accusations," he says, "having been ultimately refuted save that of being 'the Latin Quarter type.' "

Though a born educator, actually burning to teach, Pound was compelled to seek less academic circles. In 1908 he landed in Gibraltar with eighty dollars and lived on the interest for some time. The same year found him for the first time in Italy, which was to become his future home. *A Lume Spento* (1908) was printed in Venice. A few months later he was established in London, where he lived until 1920. Convinced of the aridity of England, he crossed over to Paris, from which, after four years, he moved to Rapallo, on the Italian Riviera, where he has lived since 1924.

Shortly after Pound's arrival in London he published *Personae* (1909), a work which, though small, contains some of his most arresting verse.

Although the young American was a total stranger to the English literary world, his book made a definite impression on critics of all shades and tastes. Edward Thomas, one of the most cautious appraisers, wrote, "The beauty of it is the beauty of passion, sincerity and intensity, not of beautiful words and images and suggestions. . . . The thought dominates the words and is greater than they are." Another critic (Scott James) placed the chief emphasis on Pound's metrical innovations, saying, "At first the whole thing may seem to be mere madness and rhetoric, a vain exhibition of force and passion without beauty. But as we read on, these curious meters seem to have a law and order of their own."

Exultations (1909) was printed in the autumn of the same year that saw the appearance of *Personae*. It was received with even greater cordiality; a new force and freedom were manifest in such poems as "Sestina: Altaforte," "Ballad of the Goodly Fere," and the stark "Ballad for Gloom." Both books were republished in a single volume, with other poems, as *Personae* in 1926.

In both of these books there is evident Pound's erudition—a familiarity with medieval literature, Provençal singers, Troubadour ballads—an erudition which, later, was to degenerate into pedantry and become hard and sterile. Too often in his later work Pound seems to be more the archeologist than the artist, digging with tired energy and indiscriminate curiosity. *Canzoni* (1911) and *Ripostes* (1912) contain much that is sharp and living; they also contain the germs of desiccation and decay. Pound began to scatter his talents; to start movements which he quickly discarded for new ones; to spend himself in poetic propaganda for the Vorticists and others (see Preface); to give more and more time to translation

(*The Sonnets of Guido Cavalcanti* appeared in 1912) and arrangements from the Chinese (*Cathay*, paraphrased from the notes of Ernest Fenollosa, was issued in 1915); to lay the chief stress on technique, shades of color, verbal *nuances*. The result was a lassitude of the creative faculties, an impoverishment of emotion. In the later books, Pound begins to suffer from a decadence which appraises the values in life chiefly as esthetic values. And this decadence expresses itself in a weariness, in an exasperated, querulous attitude harmful if not fatal to the imagination.

But this is true only with reservations. Nor can an estimate of Pound be complete without an examination of his *Cantos*, a difficult task since they themselves are incomplete and almost inaccessible to the average reader. Twenty-seven cantos of this "poem of some length" have appeared—I-XVI in 1925, XVII-XXVII in 1928, both privately printed in de luxe volumes—and three more are being published with the others in a general edition. The poem, when and if complete, will comprise about one hundred cantos and is Pound's major opus. Complex in tonality, bewildering in its shifting of space and time, the scheme of the *Cantos* is reasoned and even formal: Pound is endeavoring to write a Human Comedy in three dimensions and many voices, using the repetitions of history as leitmotifs. The structure is intended to be fugual (with subject, response and counter-subject) and Pound, who has written music as well as words, has conceived the composition on a huge scale. Perplexing though the parts have been to his contemporaries, the work has already had its influence. Its sudden juxtapositions of the Homeric, the medieval, and the modern world, reveal the beginning of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Crane's *The Bridge*, and the accent of MacLeish's longer poems.

As propagandist Pound has played a more recognizable rôle. He fought for the musician Antheil, publishing a brochure on his harmonic experiments, wrote a study of Gaudier Brzeska (1916) when that sculptor was unknown, and championed a dozen innovators long before their imitators became popular. As a scholar his Provençal paraphrases remain as models, and *The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* was expanded into the elaborately annotated *The Poems of Guido Cavalcanti* in 1930.

Though much of *Lustra* (1917) and *Poems 1918-1922* seems drawn not from life but from literature, many of the poems yield something beyond brilliant anachronisms. The influence of Browning is less pronounced, and reflections of his earlier energy are manifest.

Finally, any attempt to do justice to Pound must take account of the chronology of his work in relation to that of others. He invented the term "Imagism" before the ensuing period of exploitation. He published *Cathay* (1915), anticipating the flood of Chinese and Japanese translations that later inundated the country. He "placed" Tagore as literary artist, not as messiah, and saw the Bengalese poet become a cult. As early as 1922, he established (in the *Mercure de France*) the proportion between Flaubert and James Joyce when the author of *Ulysses* was an unknown name. Yet in 1930 Pound was able to say that no American publisher had ever accepted a book on his recommendation and no American cultural institution had ever invited him to lecture. This in spite of his *How to Read*, an exposition of a critical method and an evidence that his work had been done in pursuance of plan and coherent design.

Too special to achieve permanence, too intellectual to become popular, Pound's contribution to his age should not be underestimated. He was a pioneer in the new forms; he fought dullness wherever he encountered it. He helped to broaden many of the paths which a score of unconsciously influenced poets tread with such ease and nonchalance. Much of his poetry gesticulates instead of speaking, a great portion of his art is poetry in pantomime. And yet, without Pound, American poetry would scarcely have been the many-voiced, multi-colored thing that it is.

AN IMMORALITY

Sing we for love and idleness,
Naught else is worth the having.

Though I have been in many a land,
There is naught else in living.

And I would rather have my sweet,
Though rose-leaves die of grieving,

Than do high deeds in Hungary
To pass all men's believing.

A VIRGINAL

No, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.
I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness,
For my surrounding air has a new lightness;
Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly

And left me cloaked as with a gauze of ether;
As with sweet leaves; as with a subtle clearness.
Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness
To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.

No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavor,
Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.
Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,
As winter's wound with her sleight hand she staunches,
Hath of the trees a likeness of the savor:
As white their bark, so white this lady's hours.

BALLAD FOR GLOOM

For God, our God is a gallant foe
That playeth behind the veil.

I have loved my God as a child at heart
That seeketh deep bosoms for rest,
I have loved my God as a maid to man—
But lo, this thing is best:

To love your God as a gallant foe that plays behind the veil;
To meet your God as the night winds meet beyond Arcturus' pale.

I have played with God for a woman,
I have staked with my God for truth,
I have lost to my God as a man, clear-eyed—
His dice be not of ruth.

For I am made as a naked blade,
But hear ye this thing in sooth:

Who loseth to God as man to man
Shall win at the turn of the game.
I have drawn my blade where the lightnings meet
But the ending is the same:
Who loseth to God as the sword blades lose
Shall win at the end of the game.

For God, our God is a gallant foe that playeth behind the veil.
When God deigns not to overthrow hath need of triple mail.

GREEK EPIGRAM

Day and night are never weary,
Nor yet is God of creating
For day and night their torch-bearers
The aube and the crepuscule.

So, when I weary of praising the dawn and the sunset,
Let me be no more counted among the immortals;
But number me amid the wearying ones,
Let me be a man as the herd,
And as the slave that is given in barter.

BALLAD OF THE GOODLY FERE[1]

(*Simon Zelotes speaketh it somewhile after the Crucifixion*)

Ha' we lost the goodliest fere o' all
For the priests and the gallows tree?
Aye, lover he was of brawny men,
O' ships and the open sea.

When they came wi' a host to take Our Man
His smile was good to see,
"First let these go!" quo' our Goodly Fere,
"Or I'll see ye damned," says he.

Aye, he sent us out through the crossed high spears,
And the scorn of his laugh rang free,
"Why took ye not me when I walked about
Alone in the town?" says he.

Oh we drank his "Hale" in the good red wine
When we last made company,
No capon priest was the Goodly Fere
But a man o' men was he.

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[1] Fere = Mate, Companion.

I ha' seen him drive a hundred men
Wi' a bundle o' cords swung free,
When they took the high and holy house
For their pawn and treasury.

They'll no get him a' in a book I think
Though they write it cunningly;
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere
But aye loved the open sea.

If they think they ha' snared our Goodly Fere
They are fools to the last degree.
"I'll go to the feast," quo' our Goodly Fere,
"Though I go to the gallows tree."

"Ye ha' seen me heal the lame and the blind,
And wake the dead," says he,
"Ye shall see one thing to master all:
'Tis how a brave man dies on the tree."

A son of God was the Goodly Fere
That bade us his brothers be.
I ha' seen him cow a thousand men.
I ha' seen him upon the tree.

He cried no cry when they drave the nails
And the blood gushed hot and free,
The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue
But never a cry cried he.

I ha' seen him cow a thousand men
On the hills o' Galilee,
They whined as he walked out calm between,
Wi' his eyes like the gray o' the sea.

Like the sea that brooks no voyaging
With the winds unleashed and free,
Like the sea that he cowed at Gennesaret
Wi' twey words spoke' suddenly.

A master of men was the Goodly Fere,
A mate of the wind and sea,
If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere
They are fools eternally.

i.e. to fact he proved he

I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' they nailed him to the tree.

was not a spirit.

A GIRL

The tree has entered my hands,
The sap has ascended my arms,
The tree has grown in my breast
Downward,
The branches grow out of me, like arms.

Tree you are,
Moss you are,
You are violets with wind above them.
A child—so high—you are;
And all this is folly to the world.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

DANCE FIGURE

(*For the Marriage in Cana of Galilee*)

Dark eyed,
O woman of my dreams,
Ivory sandaled,
There is none like thee among the dancers,
None with swift feet.

I have not found thee in the tents,
In the broken darkness.
I have not found thee at the well-head
Among the women with pitchers.

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark;
Thy face as a river with lights.

White as an almond are thy shoulders;
As new almonds stripped from the husk.
They guard thee not with eunuchs;
Not with bars of copper.

Gilt turquoise and silver are in the place of thy rest.
A brown robe with threads of gold woven in patterns hast thou
    gathered about thee,
O Nathat-Ikanaie, "Tree-at-the-river."

As a rillet among the sedge are thy hands upon me;
Thy fingers a frosted stream.

Thy maidens are white like pebbles;
Their music about thee!

There is none like thee among the dancers;
None with swift feet.

ΔΩΡΙΑ

Be in me as the eternal moods
        of the bleak wind, and not
As transient things are—
        gayety of flowers.
Have me in the strong loneliness
        of sunless cliffs
And of gray waters.
        Let the gods speak softly of us
In days hereafter,
        the shadowy flowers of Orcus
Remember thee.

SILET

When I behold how black, immortal ink
Drips from my deathless pen—ah, well-away!
Why should we stop at all for what I think?
There is enough in what I chance to say.

It is enough that we once came together;
What is the use of setting it to rime?
When it is autumn do we get spring weather,
Or gather may of harsh northwindish time?

It is enough that we once came together;
What if the wind have turned against the rain?
It is enough that we once came together;
Time has seen this, and will not turn again.

And who are we, who know that last intent,
To plague tomorrow with a testament!

PORTRAIT D'UNE FEMME[1]

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,
London has swept about you this score years
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.
Great minds have sought you—lacking some one else.
You have been second always. Tragical?
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,
One average mind—with one thought less, each year.
Oh, you are patient. I have seen you sit
Hours, where something might have floated up.
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you
And takes strange gain away:
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale for two,
Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else
That might prove useful and yet never proves,
That never fits a corner or shows use,
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;
Idols, and ambergris and rare inlays.
These are your riches, your great store; and yet
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,

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[1] Compare the poem on the same theme on page 565.

Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:
In the slow float of differing light and deep,
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,
Nothing that's quite your own.
Yet this is you.

THE RETURN

See, they return; ah see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the
uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!
These were the swift to harry;
These were the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,
pallid the leash-men!

ENVOI

(*1919*)

Go, dumb-born book,
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:
Hadst thou but song
As thou hast subjects known,

Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,
And build her glories their longevity.

Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Recking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one color
Braving time.

Tell her that goes
With song upon her lips
But sings not out the song, nor knows
The maker of it, some other mouth,
May be as fair as hers,
Might, in new ages, gain her worshipers,
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

Louis Untermeyer was born October 1, 1885, in New York City, where he lived, except for brief intervals, until 1923. His schooling was fitful and erratic; he liked to boast that he was the least educated writer in America. He attended the De Witt Clinton High School, but his failure to comprehend the essentials of Geometry prevented him from graduating, and the halls of colleges were unknown to him until he became an occasional lecturer. In youth his one ambition was to be a composer. At sixteen he appeared as a semi-professional pianist; at seventeen he entered his father's jewelry manufacturing establishment. For almost twenty years he commuted to Newark, New Jersey, being advanced from designer to factory manager and vice-president. In 1923 he retired and, after two years of study abroad, returned to America to devote himself entirely to literature.

It is difficult for the present compiler to consider this writer as severely as he deserves, the editor not having attained toward himself that Olympian detachment which is the goal of criticism. However, it is evident that his work is divided into four kinds: his poetry, his parodies, his translations and his critical prose. His initial volume of verse, *First Love* (1911), was a sequence of some seventy lyrics in which the influences of Heine and Housman were not only obvious but crippling. With the exception of possibly three of these songs, the volume is devoid of character and, in spite of a certain technical ease, wholly undistinguished.

It was with *Challenge* (1914), reissued in a slightly revised edition in 1920, that the author first spoke in his own idiom. Although the ghost of Henley haunts many of these pages, and although the volume would benefit greatly by a few less "urges" and "surges," poems like "Prayer," "Swimmers" and "Caliban in the Coal Mines" showed "a fresh and lyrical sympathy with the modern world. . . . His vision" (thus *The Boston Transcript*) "is a social vision, his spirit a passionately energized command of the forces of justice." *Challenge* was succeeded by *These Times* (1917), an "interval" book which, lacking the unity of its predecessor, sought, though it did not attain, larger horizons. *The New Adam* (1920) is more of a unit: "a frank expression of the modern poet's conception of love, this new Adam, caught in the eternal struggle of the flesh, is the child of a complex and analytical age." Individually, the poems alternate with regularity between a few successes and many failures.

Roast Leviathan (1923) was considered by many the ripest and most varied of his volumes, especially by the English critics. Being too near to consider it dispassionately, the editor turns brazenly to the latter. "In *Roast Leviathan*," wrote *The Observer*, "Mr. Untermeyer's natural luxuriance and exuberance are never out of place; the reader can believe he is meeting the very Leviathan of Job and the psalmist." "The title-poem, with its lavish use of interior rhyme and assonance, has the intricate brilliance of an Oriental tapestry." Edwin Muir, the author of *Attitudes*, wrote in *The New Age*, "This volume shows real reasons for its author's fame. He has, indeed, more vigor than a dozen of poets who have a reputation equal to his. On every subject he treats, he gives opulent measure, an opulence within the reach of nobody in contemporary verse but himself."

Ungratefully enough, the author himself prefers *Burning Bush* (1928) and the lighter *Food and Drink* (1932) to any of the preceding volumes. Physically the smallest of his books, they are poetically the fullest; the key is quieter, the tone is surer. No longer dependent on muscular adjectives or heaven-storming epithets, they seem to the author to present a fusion which his earlier poetry lacked, a fusion of outer and inner reality. As Herbert S. Gorman wrote, "Whereas in his other poetry the passion was free, on the surface, exuberant, running boisterously between earth and heaven, and (incidentally) sometimes tripping itself up, it is now like the dark current of blood flowing implacably through arteries that map white flesh. . . . The restraint and suggestion, the push of emotion that wholly impregnates but which is semi-obscured, the clear comprehension and unstressed technique, prove that he has realized his complete maturity in poetry."

The same year saw the publication of *Moses* (1928), miscalled a novel. Actually the work is a cross between an historical reconstruction and a phantasia. The Biblical narrative is followed in the main, but, enlarging upon hints in the Talmud and ancient Egyptian records, the author indulges in speculations and apocryphal tales in a prose that no factual historian would allow.

New Songs for New Voices (1928), in collaboration with David and Clara Mannes, is a collection of modern poems set for the first time to modern music, in which the editor made his public début as a not too serious composer. *Blue Rhine—Black Forest* (1930) is a day- and guide-book, where humor, unknown legends and explicit directions wind themselves through western Germany.

Four volumes of his critical satires appeared: *The Younger Quire* (1911), a tiny burlesque of an anthology (*The Younger Choir*) issued anonymously, of which only one hundred copies were printed; "*—And Other Poets*" (1917); *Including Horace* (1919), paraphrases of the Latin bard as various classic and modern poets might have rendered him; and *Heavens* (1922) in which the poet after gently mocking his contemporaries, bade farewell to the field of parody. The four were combined, with several new satires, in *Collected Parodies* (1926), which the author, with great self-restraint, refrained from calling "Parodies Lost."

As translator, he has published several volumes, of which the best known are *Poems of Heinrich Heine* (1917, revised edition, 1923) and *The Fat of the Cat* (1925), freely paraphrased from the Swiss stories of Gottfried Keller.

A book of essays, *The New Era in American Poetry* (1919), was amplified and made into a more balanced and comprehensive set of twenty subdivided chapters under the title *American Poetry Since 1900* (1923). The two critical anthologies, *Modern American Poetry* and *Modern British Poetry*, have been revised and enlarged several times since their original publication in 1919 and 1920 and are used as textbooks in the universities. A collection of modern poems for young people, was published in two editions:

This Singing World (1923) and *This Singing World for Younger Children* (1926). *Yesterday and Today* (1927), a "comparative anthology," contrasted the poetry of the present with that of the immediate past. These volumes were adopted in high schools and junior colleges, as was *The Forms of Poetry* (1926), a "pocket-dictionary of verse." *The Book of Living Verse* appeared in 1932.

Besides admitting himself the author of these too many volumes, Untermeyer was also one of the editors of *The Seven Arts* and *Paper Books*, itinerant lecturer at various universities, a fairly regular contributor to *The Saturday Review of Literature*. In 1928, he achieved his life-long desire, acquiring a farm, a trout-stream and half a mountain of sugar-maples in the Adirondacks.

CALIBAN IN THE COAL MINES

God, we don't like to complain;
  We know that the mine is no lark.
But—there's the pools from the rain;
  But—there's the cold and the dark.

God, You don't know what it is—
  You, in Your well-lighted sky—
Watching the meteors whizz;
  Warm, with a sun always by.

God, if You had but the moon
  Stuck in Your cap for a lamp,
Even You'd tire of it soon,
  Down in the dark and the damp.

Nothing but blackness above
  And nothing that moves but the cars. . . .
God, if You wish for our love,
  Fling us a handful of stars!

SWIMMERS

I took the crazy short-cut to the bay;
Over a fence or two and through a hedge,
Jumping a private road, along the edge
Of backyards full of drying wash it lay.
And now, the last set being played and over,
I hurried past the ruddy lakes of clover;

I swung my racket at astonished oaks,
My arm still tingling from aggressive strokes.
Tennis was over for the day—
I took the leaping short-cut to the bay.

Then the quick plunge into the cool, green dark,
The windy waters rushing past me, through me;
Filled with a sense of some heroic lark
Existing in a vigor clean and roomy.
Swiftly I rose to meet the cat-like sea
That sprang upon me with a hundred claws,
And grappled, pulled me down and played with me.
Then, held suspended in the tightening pause
When one wave grows into a toppling acre,
I dived headlong into the foremost breaker;
Pitting against a cold and turbulent strife,
The feverish intensity of life.
Out of the foam I lurched and rode the wave,
Swimming, hand over hand, against the wind;
I felt the sea's vain pounding, and I grinned
Knowing I was its master, not its slave. . . .

Back on the curving beach I stood again,
Facing the bath-house, when a group of men,
Stumbling beneath some sort of weight, went by.
I could not see the heavy thing they carried;
I only heard: "He never gave a cry—"
"Who's going to tell her?—" "Yes, and they just married—"
"Such a good swimmer, too" . . . And then they passed,
Leaving the silence throbbing and aghast.

A moment there my frightened heart hung slack,
And then the rich, retarded blood came back
Singing a livelier tune; and in my pulse
Beat the great wave that endlessly exults. . . .
Why I was there and whither I must go,
I did not care. Enough for me to know
The same persistent struggle and the glowing
Waste of all spendthrift hours, bravely showing
Life, an adventure hazardous and gay,
And death, a long and vivid holiday.

PRAYER

God, though this life is but a wraith,
Although we know not what we use,
Although we grope with little faith,
Give me the heart to fight—and lose.

Ever insurgent let me be,
Make me more daring than devout;
From sleek contentment keep me free,
And fill me with a buoyant doubt.

Open my eyes to visions girt
With beauty, and with wonder lit—
But let me always see the dirt,
And all that spawn and die in it.

Open my ears to music; let
Me thrill with Spring's first flutes and drums—
But never let me dare forget
The bitter ballads of the slums.

From compromise and things half-done,
Keep me, with stern and stubborn pride.
And when, at last, the fight is won,
God, keep me still unsatisfied.

HANDS

Strange, how this smooth and supple joint can be
Put to so many purposes. It checks
And rears the monsters of machinery
And shapes the idle gallantries of sex.

Those hands that light the fuse and dig the trap,
Fingers that spin the earth or plunge through shame—
And yours, that lie so lightly in your lap,
Are only blood and dust, all are the same.

What mastery directs them through the world
And gives these delicate bones so great a power?
You drop your head. You sleep. Your hands are curled
Loosely, like some half-opened, perfumed flower.

An hour ago they burned in mine and sent
Armies with banners charging through my veins.
Now they are cool and white; they rest content,
Curved in a smile. The mystery remains.

THE ONE VOICE

This is your hour. Plum and freesia
Wait till you speak for them as light
Grows sultry and a breath of Asia
Sharpens the May-soft night.

Over the centuries of slaughter
The breath moves, bearing fitfully,
Along a waste of bitter water
Unsweetened by a tree,

The ageless cry of Jewish women
Too steeped in suffering to be shrill,
Mixed with a song that fear and famine
Tortured but could not kill.

Now the air turns. A dark wind tramples
The singing dust until a voice
Calls on the stones of buried temples
To answer and rejoice.

The music falters; hate in armor
Beats black drums on a copper sky.
Death rides over the shaken murmur
While its last echoes die. . . .

And still the one voice carries, stronger
For all the suffering it endures.
It is a lost world's homeward hunger,
And it is yours.

DOG AT NIGHT

At first he stirs uneasily in sleep
And, since the moon does not run off, unfolds
Protesting paws. Grumbling that he must keep
Both eyes awake, he whimpers; then he scolds

And, rising to his feet, demands to know
The stranger's business. "You who break the dark
With insolent light, who are you? Where do you go?"
But nothing answers his indignant bark.
The moon ignores him, walking on as though
Dogs never were. Stiffened to fury now,
His small hairs stand upright, his howls come fast,
And terrible to hear is the bow-wow
That tears the night. Stirred by this bugle-blast,
The farmer's bitch grows active; without pause
Summons her mastiff and the hound that lies
Three fields away to rally to the cause.
And the next county wakes. And miles beyond
Throats ring themselves and brassy lungs respond
With threats, entreaties, bellowings and cries,
Chasing the white intruder down the skies.

BY "STONY WATER"

Victim of words in crowns or tatters,
  Confused by every claim of speech,
I seek instruction from my betters
  Who have not anything to teach.

These rocks have never learned dissembling;
  No one has ever asked this hill
What keeps its whitened bones from crumbling,
  What girders prop its mounting will.

Held in the ripening heart of summer,
  Nothing is needed to translate
A bluejay's own haphazard grammar
  Only the wind can conjugate.

The pebbled water's leafy murmur
  Fondles its every syllable
Until the cool asides are warmer
  Than those the lips use for a spell.

And while the last vain word is lettered
  And the long-tortured phrase is caught,
The air is full of the unuttered,
  And speech is but an afterthought.

A GEORGIAN ANTHOLOGY

Never was landscape quite so clipped and callow
As this between these pale bucolic covers;
On these smooth lawns the water-color lovers
Stray through the copse where kine and crocus follow.
And elms—elms lonely, leaning, haunted, hollow—
Are packed with thrushes, wrens and wheeling plovers
As, over every sprig of thyme, there hovers
At least one curlew or nostalgic swallow.

Here, far beyond the reach of life or trams,
A world composed of ever-verdant vales
Is thick with adjectives and thrice-told tales,
Blackbirds and buttercups and gentle dams;
While, from the hawthorn, immemorial lambs
Keep moonlit trysts with deathless nightingales.

COUNTRY EVENING

This is the time when birds no longer cry
   Haphazardly and high,
Nor dot the rails nor punctuate the trees
   In swift apostrophes.
This is the time day hesitates, as though
   It almost feared to go,
And the great span that promised to remain
   Goes back into thin rain.
And, doubtful of itself, night throws one spark
   To blaze the trail of dark;
And earth gives off cool breaths, green-growing smells,
   And something else
That lingers between light and atmosphere;
   And the third star swings clear.
This is the hour for lamps; this is the time
   For the slow, homeward climb.

FOOD AND DRINK

Why has our poetry eschewed
The rapture and response of food?

What hymns are sung, what praises said
For home-made miracles of bread?
Since what we love has always found
Expression in enduring sound,
Music and verse should be competing
To match the transient joy of eating.
There should be present in our songs
As many tastes as there are tongues;
There should be humbly celebrated
One passion that is never sated.
Let us begin it with the first
Distinction of a conscious thirst
When the collusion of the vine
Uplifted water into wine.
Let us give thanks before we turn
To other things of less concern
For all the poetry of the table:
Clams that parade their silent fable;
Lobsters that have a rock for stable;
Red-faced tomatoes ample as
A countryman's full-bosomed lass;
Plain-spoken turnips; honest beets;
The carnal gusto of red meats;
Colorless, mint-completed lamb;
The wood-fire pungence of smoked ham;
Young veal that's smooth as natural silk;
The lavish motherliness of milk;
Parsley and lemon-butter that add
Spring sweetness unto river shad;
Thin flakes of halibut and cod,
Pickerel, flounder, snapper, scrod,
And every fish whose veins may be
Charged with the secrets of the sea;
Sweet-sour carp, beloved by Jews;
Pot-luck simplicity of stews;
Crabs, juiciest of Nature's jokes;
The deep reserve of artichokes;
Mushrooms, whose taste is texture, loath
To tell of their mysterious growth;
Quick, mealy comfort glowing in
A baked potato's crackled skin;

The morning promise, hailed by man,
Of bacon crisping in the pan;
The sage compound of *Hasenpfeffer*
With dumplings born of flour and zephyr;
Spinach whose spirit is the soil;
Anchovies glorified in oil;
The slow-gold nectar maples yield;
Pale honey tasting of the field
Where every clover is Hymettus;
The cooling sanity of lettuce
And every other herbal green
Whose touch is calm, whose heart is clean;
Assertive leek; rank chard; the dour
Extravagance of cauliflower;
Succulent bean-sprouts, bamboo-shoots;
The sapid catalogue of fruits:
Plebeian apple, caustic grape,
Quinces that have no gift for shape,
Dull plums that mind their own affairs,
Incurably bland and blunted pears,
Fantastic passion-fruit, frank lemons
With acid tongues as sharp as women's,
Exotic loquats, sly persimmons,
White currants, amber-fleshed sultanas,
(Miniature and sweetened mannas)
Expansive peaches, suave bananas,
Oranges ripening in crates,
Tight-bodied figs, sun-wrinkled dates,
Melons that have their own vagaries;
The bright astringency of berries;
Crêpe-satin luxury of cream;
Wedding-cake that fulfills the dream;
Pepper, whose satire stings and cuts;
Raw liberality of nuts;
Sauces of complex mysteries;
Proverbial parsnips; muscular cheese;
Innocent eggs that scorn disguises;
Languid molasses; burning spices
In kitchen-oracles to Isis;
Thick sauerkraut's fat-bellied savor;
Anything with a chocolate flavor;

Deep generosity of pies;
Hot puddings bursting to surprise
The smug monotony of rice;
Raisins that doze in cinnamon buns;
Kentucky biscuits, Scottish scones;
Falstaffian tarts that mock the chaste
Rose-elegance of almond-paste;
Venison steaks that smack of cloisters;
Goose-liver for the soul that roisters;
Reticent prawn; Lucullan oysters;
Sausages, fragrant link on link;
The vast ambrosias of drink:
Tea, that domestic mandarin;
Bucolic cider; loose-lipped gin;
Coffee, extract of common sense,
Purgative of the night's pretense;
Cocoa's prim nursery; the male
Companionship of crusty ale;
Cognac as oily as a ferret;
The faintly iron thrust of claret;
Episcopal port, aged and austere;
Rebellious must of grape; the clear,
Bluff confraternity of beer—

All these are good, all are a part
Of man's imperative needs that start
Not in the palate but the heart.
Thus fat and fiber, root and leaf
Become quick fuel and slow grief.
These, through the chemistry of blood,
Sustain his hungering manhood,
Fulfilling passion, ripening pain;
Steel in his bone, fire at his brain. . . .
So until man abjures the meats
Terrestrial and impermanent sweets,
Growing beyond the things he eats,
Let us be thankful for the good
Beauty and benison of food,
Let us join chiming vowel with vowel
To rhapsodize fish, flesh and fowl,
And let us thank God in our songs
There are as many tastes as tongues!

SCARCELY SPRING

Nothing is real. The world has lost its edges;
The sky, uncovered, is the one thing clear.
The earth is little more than atmosphere
Where yesterday were rocks and naked ridges.
Nothing is fixed. Tentative rain dislodges
Green upon green or lifts a coral spear
That breaks in blossom, and the hills appear
Too frail to be the stony fruit of ages.

Nothing will keep. Even the heavens waver.
Young larks, whose first thought is to cry aloud,
Have spent their bubble notes. And here or there
A few slow-hearted boys and girls discover
A moon as unsubstantial as a cloud
Painted by air on washed and watery air.

THE DARK CHAMBER

The brain forgets, but the blood will remember.
   There, when the play of sense is over,
The last, low spark in the darkest chamber
   Will hold all there is of love and lover.

The war of words, the life-long quarrel
   Of self against self will resolve into nothing;
Less than the chain of berry-red coral
   Crying against the dead black of her clothing.

What has the brain that it hopes to last longer?
   The blood will take from forgotten violence,
The groping, the break of her voice in anger.
   There will be left only color and silence.

These will remain, these will go searching
   Your veins for life when the flame of life smolders:
The night that you two saw the mountains marching
   Up against dawn with the stars on their shoulders—

The jetting poplars' arrested fountains
  As you drew her under them, easing her pain—
The notes, not the words, of a half-finished sentence—
  The music, the silence. . . . These will remain.

LONG FEUD

Where, without bloodshed, can there be
A more relentless enmity
Than the long feud fought silently

Between man and the growing grass.
Man's the aggressor, for he has
Weapons to humble and harass

The impudent spears that charge upon
His sacred privacy of lawn.
He mows them down, and they are gone

Only to lie in wait, although
He builds above and digs below
Where never a root would dare to go.

His are the triumphs till the day
There's no more grass to cut away
And, weary of labor, weary of play,

Having exhausted every whim,
He stretches out each conquering limb.
And then the small grass covers him.

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER

Jean Starr was born at Zanesville, Ohio, May 13, 1886, and educated at the Putnam Seminary in the city of her birth. At sixteen she came to New York City, pursuing special studies at Columbia. In 1907 she married Louis Untermeyer and, although she had written some prose previous to the poetic renascence, her first volume was published more than ten years later.

Growing Pains (1918) is a thin book of thirty-four poems, the result of eight years' slow and critical creation. This highly selective process did much to bring the volume up to an unusual level; a severity of taste and standards maintain the poet on her austere plane. Perfection is always a passion with her; the first poem in the book ("Clay Hills") declares it with almost intolerant definiteness.

Acutely self-analytical, there is a stern, uncompromising relentlessness toward her introspections that keeps them from being wistful or pathetic. These poems are, as she explains in her title-poem—

> No songs for an idle lute,
> No pretty tunes of coddled ills,
> But the bare chart of my growing pains.

Intellect is always in the ascendancy, even in the most ecstatic verses. In a curiously religious poem, "A Man" (dedicated to her father), she pictures herself as a child, and expresses the whole psychology of juvenile love of poor literature in such a phrase as:

> A book held gaping on my knees,
> Watering a sterile romance with my thoughts.

But it is not only her search for truth and a keen ear for the exact word that make these poems distinctive. A sharp color sense, a surprising whimsicality, a translation of the ordinary in terms of the unexplored illumine such poems as "Sinfonia Domestica," "Clothes," and the much-quoted "Autumn." In the last named, with its brilliant combination of painting and housewifery, Mrs. Untermeyer has reproduced her early environment with bright pungency; "Verhaeren's Flemish *genre* pictures are no better," writes Amy Lowell. Several of her purely pictorial poems establish a swift kinship between the most romantic and most prosaic objects. The tiny "Moonrise" is an example; so is "High Tide," that, in one extended metaphor, turns the mere fact of a physical law into an arresting fancy. As "Autumn" is a celebration of domesticity, an almost exalted paean of housekeeping, so most of this poet's work embodies an essentially feminine, or, one might better say, womanly attitude to life.

Dreams Out of Darkness (1921) is a ripening of this author's power with a richer musical undercurrent. An increase of melody is manifest on every page, possibly most striking in "Lake Song," which, beneath its symbolism, is one of the few notable unrhymed lyrics of the period. The form of this poetry is, as Joseph Freeman has written, "distinguished not only by the clear qualities of chiseled marble, not only by a music so melodious that some of her free verse pieces have to be read two or three times before their lack of rhyme becomes noticeable, but also by its intellectual fluidity. She has mastered her emotions without deadening them." And Amy Lowell, amplifying this theme, concludes, "After all, beautiful as Mrs. Untermeyer's forms often are, it is her thoughts that make the book. This is the very heart of a woman, naked and serious, beautiful and unashamed."

Her training as a musician (she made her début as a *Liedersinger* in Vienna and London in 1924) added to her equipment as translator of the "official" life of *Franz Schubert* by Oscar Bie in 1928.

Steep Ascent (1927) marks this poet's spiritual as well as poetic climax. The dominant note, as might have been foreseen, is ethical, but there is no reliance on mere religiosity. Hers is a spirit that rejects the facile both in phrase and sentiment, a spirit whose essential quality other poets were quick to recognize. "Here," wrote Mary Sinton Leitch in the *Norfolk Virginian*, "is no sorrow feigned for purposes of art, sorrow that gazes on itself to see what expression of despair best becomes it. Here is ruggedness of scarred, enduring granite and sincerity hardly to be surpassed." "We are aware," said Joseph Auslander in the *New York Sun*, "of her patterns only in that they tighten the intensity of her utterance and deepen the somber and exalted colors. . . . The book literally takes fire, not as a conflagration but rather as a holy torch." Her technique was thus summarized by Edmund Wilson in *The New Republic:* "What is most remarkable about Jean Starr Untermeyer is the peculiar shading and force of her style. I believe that hers is classically Hebraic. She has always seemed to me one of the few writers who have successfully preserved in a modern language something of the authentic austerity of Jewish literature. . . . The strength and interest of her poetry derive from the survival in it of those fierce and austere habits of thinking and feeling."

The poems written subsequently to *Steep Ascent*—four of which are reprinted in these pages—have a new serenity, even a sly humor; they do not proceed, as did many of the others, from struggle, but from assurance. The pitch is lower but no less vibrant; the note of rigorous austerity is resolved into one of peace and tenderness.

HIGH TIDE

I edged back against the night.
The sea growled assault on the wave-bitten shore.
And the breakers,
Like young and impatient hounds,
Sprang with rough joy on the shrinking sand.
Sprang—but were drawn back slowly
With a long, relentless pull,
Whimpering, into the dark.

Then I saw who held them captive;
And I saw how they were bound
With a broad and quivering leash of light,
Held by the moon,
As, calm and unsmiling,
She walked the deep fields of the sky.

AUTUMN

(*To My Mother*)

How memory cuts away the years,
And how clean the picture comes
Of autumn days, brisk and busy;
Charged with keen sunshine.
And you, stirred with activity,
The spirit of those energetic days.

There was our back-yard,
So plain and stripped of green,
With even the weeds carefully pulled away
From the crooked red bricks that made the walk,
And the earth on either side so black.

Autumn and dead leaves burning in the sharp air.
And winter comforts coming in like a pageant.
I shall not forget them:—
Great jars pompous with the raw green of pickles,
Standing in a solemn row across the back of the porch,
Exhaling the pungent dill;
And in the very center of the yard,
You, tending the great catsup kettle of gleaming copper,
Where fat, red tomatoes bobbed up and down
Like jolly monks in a drunken dance.
And there were bland banks of cabbages that came by the wagon-load,
Soon to be cut into delicate ribbons
Only to be crushed by the heavy, wooden stompers.
Such feathery whiteness—to come to kraut!
And after, there were grapes that hid their brightness under a gray dust,

Then gushed thrilling, purple blood over the fire;
And enameled crab-apples that tricked with their fragrance
But were bitter to taste.
And there were spicy plums and ill-shaped quinces,
And long string beans floating in pans of clear water
Like slim, green fishes.
And there was fish itself,
Salted, silver herring from the city. . . .

And you moved among these mysteries,
Absorbed and smiling and sure;
Stirring, tasting, measuring,
With the precision of a ritual.
I like to think of you in your years of power—
You, now so shaken and so powerless—
High priestess of your home.

CLAY HILLS

It is easy to mold the yielding clay.
And many shapes grow into beauty
Under the facile hand.
But forms of clay are lightly broken;
They will lie shattered and forgotten in a dingy corner.

Yet underneath the slipping clay
Is rock . . .
I would rather work in stubborn rock
All the years of my life,
And make one strong thing
And set it in a high, clean place,
To recall the granite strength of my desire.

SINFONIA DOMESTICA

When the white wave of a glory that is hardly I
  Breaks through my mind and washes it clean,
I know at last the meaning of my ecstasy,
  And know at last my wish and what it can mean.

To have sped out of life that night—to have vanished
Not as a vision, but as something touched, yet grown
Radiant as the moonlight, circling my naked shoulder;
Wrapped in a dream of beauty, longed for, but never known.

For how with our daily converse, even the sweet sharing
Of thoughts, of food, of home, of common life,
How shall I be that glory, that last desire
For which men struggle? Is Romance in a wife?

Must I bend a heart that is bowed to breaking
With a frustration, inevitable and slow,
And bank my flame to a low hearth fire, believing
You will come for warmth and life to its tempered glow?

Shall I mold my hope anew, to one of service,
And tell my uneasy soul, "Behold, this is good"?
And meet you (if we do meet), even at Heaven's threshold,
With ewer and basin, with clothing and with food?

LAKE SONG

The lapping of lake water
Is like the weeping of women,
The weeping of ancient women
Who grieved without rebellion.

The lake falls over the shore
Like tears on their curven bosoms.
Here is languid, luxurious wailing;
The wailing of kings' daughters.

So do we ever cry,
A soft, unmutinous crying,
When we know ourselves each a princess
Locked fast within her tower.

The lapping of lake water
Is like the weeping of women,
The fertile tears of women
That water the dreams of men.

BIRTHDAY

Now the beautiful business of summer is over,
Earth wraps herself in a bright, leaf-patterned shawl.
The hives cement the prodigal juice of the clover
And spendthrift gold is hoarded in bin and stall.
Beyond the wind-crisped hedge the cornstalks hover;
The pumpkin lies by the wall.

October's the heir of the year, and you, my lover,
October's darling, the first to come at her call,
May claim and hold what your wandering eyes discover
On jeweled hills that tempt a reluctant fall;
Blest by the fired earth, while skies above her
Spill golden peace over all.

COUNTRY OF NO LACK

A lilac ribbon is unbound,
A band of gradual rose untied,
And lo, the glowing book of day
Is opened on the mountainside.

What curves salute, what colors sound
From this so-rich-illumined scroll,
For whose perusal one need pay
Only a just delight as toll.

The brook's clean silver set in stones
Is balanced by the silver sheen
Of clean-stripped logs, which in a field
Seem floating down a river of green.

Furze are not flowers, but the tones
Of sunlight that a bird has sung,
And broken purples but the yield
Of hoarded twilights, meadow-flung.

Against a heaven's faithful blue,
A fadeless forest lifts its pines,
From shadows deepening into black
A slim and shadowy road inclines.

Upon the printed air, how true
Stand lizard, lake and leaf, page-still.
Here in the country of no lack,
What care can move, what grief can chill?

MOMENTARY DANIEL

Down, down, hot beast,
Not by whip but by word.
I shall not be your feast.
No, not by the Lord!

The armoring Lord
That stayed Daniel,
While the lion roared,
While the lion fell.

See, without scars,
He is quelled by a shout.

. . . .

Quick, open the bars
And let me out!

STONY WATER[1]

(*Words with a Deed*)

Here many suns, and many a sky, deep-overcast and dark,
Seasons more blind to follow than the sheep they breed,
Snow a bright angel through the valley, whitening the bark,
And Spring, forever breathless, wrought this country to your need.

A love that fathered me, and through a line too intricate to trace
Wove into pattern hillside, brook and grace to give,
Abides, with its own luminous life, stone-rooted in this place;
And from my hand to yours, my heart to yours, says "Live."

Live here. Breathe deeply on these hills. I deed them yours.
But know a country, unsurveyed, more fruitful to your touch,
Weathered of every blast, only by hope of sun endures,
And under what seems stone, untainted springs that yield so much.

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[1] See poem on the same theme on page 445.

DEW ON A DUSTY HEART

If come into this world again I must
And take unto myself another form,
Oh, let it be unblemished by a mist
Of imperfections or the line infirm.
And let it shapen to a secret wish
Untouched, untinctured, even by a dram
Of earthiness; nor let the fretted wash
Of passion fray the fine-immaculate dream.

Oh, let me come back as a melody
New as the air it takes, no taint of ill
To halt such lovely flying as birds do
Going from infinite nought to infinite all.
Giving to dusty hearts that lag at even
The dewy rest they dream of and call heaven.

ONE KIND OF HUMILITY

Shall we say heaven is not heaven
Since golden stairs are rugged and uneven?

Or that no light illuminates a star
That swings in other regions than we are?

Deny with soured breath enduring God
Because we cling so rankly to the sod?

No. Cleanse with weeping, fasting and with prayer.
Praise God. Look starward. Mount the stair!

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

John Gould Fletcher was born at Little Rock, Arkansas, January 3, 1886. He was educated at Phillips Academy and Harvard (1903-7) and, after spending several years in Massachusetts, moved to England, where, except for brief visits to the United States, he has lived ever since.

In 1913 Fletcher published five books of poems which he has referred to as "his literary wild oats," five small collections of experimental and faintly interesting verse. In 1914, shortly after the publication of his *Fire and Wine* (one of the early quintet), Fletcher joined the Imagists. With H. D. and Amy Lowell he became one of the leaders of this interesting movement and his contributions were among the outstanding features of the three anthologies which furnish so illuminating a record of the esthetics of the period. Coincident with the first appearance of *Some Imagist Poets,* Fletcher discarded his previous style and emerged as a decidedly less conservative and far more arresting poet with *Irradiations—Sand and Spray* (1915). This volume is full of an extraordinary fancy; imagination riots through it, though it is sometimes a bloodless and bodiless imagination. It is crowded—even overcrowded—with shifting subtleties; a brilliant, haphazard series of improvisations.

In the following book, *Goblins and Pagodas* (1916), Fletcher carries his unrelated harmonies much further. Color dominates him; the ambitious set of eleven "color symphonies" is an elaborate design in which tone and thought are summoned by color-associations, sometimes closely related, sometimes far-fetched. "It contains," says Conrad Aiken in his appreciative chapter on Fletcher in *Scepticisms,* "little of the emotion which relates to the daily life of men and women. . . . It is a sort of absolute poetry, a poetry of detached waver and brilliance, a beautiful flowering of language alone—a parthenogenesis, as if language were fertilized by itself rather than by thought or feeling. Remove the magic of phrase and sound and there is nothing left: no thread of continuity, no thought, no story, no emotion. But the magic of phrase and sound is powerful, and it takes one into a fantastic world."

In 1917 Fletcher again began to change in spirit as well as style. Emotion declared itself with surprising candor. After having appeared in the three Imagist anthologies, he sought for depths rather than surfaces; his "Lincoln" accomplished a closer relation to humanity. A moving mysticism speaks from *The Tree of Life* (1918); the more obviously native *Granite and Breakers* (1921) and *Parables* (1925) contain a prophetic note new to this poet. Though less arresting than the ones by which he is best known, the later poems reach depths which the preceding verses never attained. Although the unconscious often dictates Fletcher's fantasies, a calm music dominates them. A grave, subdued lyricism moves through *The Black Rock* (1928) and *Branches of Adam* (1926), in which the philosophy is akin to Nietzsche's while the motto might well be Blake's "How is it we have walked through fire, and yet are not consumed?" Never a popular poet, Fletcher gains—and suffers—from his original and fluctuating power. He is the poet held in a state of flux.

Besides his quality as poet Fletcher ranks high as a translator from the French, having made the English versions of *The Dance over Fire and Water* (by Elie Faure) in 1926 and *The Reveries of a Solitary* (by J. J. Rousseau) in 1927. *The Two Frontiers* (1930) is a highly speculative but highly serious consideration—a sort of prophetic historical essay—regarding the parallels and contrasts of America and Russia.

FROM "IRRADIATIONS"

I

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades,
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun broidered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

II

Flickering of incessant rain
On flashing pavements:
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.

The winds come clanging and clattering
From long white highroads whipping in ribbons up summits:
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-blossom,
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.

Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain
Dripping from the eaves.

III

The trees, like great jade elephants,
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants:
The clouds are their crimson howdah-canopies,
The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah.
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those trees.

IV

O seeded grass, you army of little men
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of steel:
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of Earth,
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,
And do not let me go:
For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,
The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,—
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colorless, unreal,
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

V

The morning is clean and blue and the wind blows up the clouds:
Now my thoughts gathered from afar
Once again in their patched armor, with rusty plumes and blunted swords,
Move out to war.

Smoking our morning pipes we shall ride two and two
Through the woods,
For our old cause keeps us together,
And our hatred is so precious not death or defeat can break it.

God willing, we shall this day meet that old enemy
Who has given us so many a good beating.
Thank God we have a cause worth fighting for,
And a cause worth losing and a good song to sing.

GREEN SYMPHONY

I

The glittering leaves of the rhododendrons
Balance and vibrate in the cool air;
While in the sky above them
White clouds chase each other.

Like scampering rabbits,
Flashes of sunlight sweep the lawn;
They fling in passing
Patterns of shadow,
Golden and green.

With long cascades of laughter,
The mating birds dart and swoop to the turf:
'Mid their mad trillings
Glints the gay sun behind the trees.

Down there are deep blue lakes:
Orange blossom droops in the water.
In the tower of the winds
All the bells are set adrift:
Jingling
For the dawn.

Thin fluttering streamers
Of breeze lash through the swaying boughs,
Palely expectant
The earth receives the slanting rain.

The glittering leaves of the rhododendron
Are shaken like blue-green blades of grass,
Flickering, cracking, falling:
Splintering in a million fragments.

The wind runs laughing up the slope
Stripping off handfuls of wet green leaves,
To fling in people's faces.
Wallowing on the daisy-powdered turf,
Clutching at the sunlight,
Cavorting in the shadow.

Like baroque pearls,
Like cloudy emeralds,
The clouds and the trees clash together;
Whirling and swirling,
In the tumult
Of the spring,
And the wind.

II

The trees splash the sky with their fingers,
A restless green rout of stars.

With whirling movement
They swing their boughs
About their stems:
Planes on planes of light and shadow
Pass among them,
Opening fanlike to fall.

The trees are like a sea;
Tossing;
Trembling,
Roaring,
Wallowing,
Darting their long green flickering fronds up at the sky,
Spotted with white blossom-spray.

The trees are roofs:
Hollow caverns of cool blue shadow,
Solemn arches
In the afternoons.
The whole vast horizon
In terrace beyond terrace,
Pinnacle above pinnacle,
Lifts to the sky
Serrated ranks of green on green.

They caress the roofs with their fingers,
They sprawl about the river to look into it;
Up the hill they come
Gesticulating challenge:
They cower together

In dark valleys;
They yearn out over the fields.

Enameled domes
Tumble upon the grass,
Crashing in ruin,
Quiet at last

The trees lash the sky with their leaves,
Uneasily shaking their dark green manes.

III

Far let the voices of the mad wild birds be calling me,
I will abide in this forest of pines.

When the wind blows
Battling through the forest,
I hear it distantly,
The crash of a perpetual sea.

When the rain falls,
I watch the silver spears slanting downwards
From pale river-pools of sky,
Enclosed in dark fronds.

When the sun shines,
I weave together distant branches till they enclose mighty circles,
I sway to the movement of hooded summits,
I swim leisurely in deep blue seas of air.

I hug the smooth bark of stately red pillars
And with cones carefully scattered
I mark the progression of dark dial-shadows
Flung diagonally downwards through the afternoon.

This turf is not like turf:
It is a smooth dry carpet of velvet,
Embroidered with brown patterns of needles and cones.
These trees are not like trees:
They are innumerable feathery pagoda-umbrellas,

Stiffly ungracious to the wind,
Teetering on red-lacquered stems.

In the evening I listen to the winds' lisping,
While the conflagrations of the sunset flicker and clash behind
me,
Flamboyant crenellations of glory amid the charred ebony
boles.

In the night the fiery nightingales
Shall clash and trill through the silence:
Like the voices of mermaids crying
From the sea.

Long ago has the moon whelmed this uncompleted temple.
Stars swim like gold fish far above the black arches.

Far let the timid feet of dawn fly to catch me:
I will abide in this forest of pines:
For I have unveiled naked beauty,
And the things that she whispered to me in the darkness,
Are buried deep in my heart.

Now let the black tops of the pine-trees break like a spent wave,
Against the gray sky:
These are tombs and temples and altars sun-kindled for me.

LONDON NIGHTFALL

I saw the shapes that stood upon the clouds:
And they were tiger-breasted, shot with light,
And all of them, lifting long trumpets together,
Blew over the city, for the night to come.
Down in the street, we floundered in the mud;
Above, in endless files, gold angels came
And stood upon the clouds, and blew their horns
For night.

Like a wet petal crumpled,
Twilight fell soddenly on the weary city;
The 'buses lurched and groaned,
The shops put up their doors.

But skywards, far aloft,
The angels, vanishing, waved broad plumes of gold,
Summoning spirits from a thousand hills
To pour the thick night out upon the earth.

THE SKATERS

Black swallows swooping or gliding
In a flurry of entangled loops and curves;
The skaters skim over the frozen river.
And the grinding click of their skates as they impinge upon the surface,
Is like the brushing together of thin wing-tips of silver.

LINCOLN[1]

I

Like a gaunt, scraggly pine
Which lifts its head above the mournful sandhills;
And patiently, through dull years of bitter silence,
Untended and uncared for, begins to grow.

Ungainly, laboring, huge,
The wind of the north has twisted and gnarled its branches;
Yet in the heat of midsummer days, when thunder-clouds ring the horizon,
A nation of men shall rest beneath its shade.

And it shall protect them all,
Hold every one safe there, watching aloof in silence;
Until at last one mad stray bolt from the zenith
Shall strike it in an instant down to earth.

II

There was a darkness in this man; an immense and hollow darkness,
Of which we may not speak, nor share with him, nor enter;
A darkness through which strong roots stretched downwards into the earth

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[1] See pages 105, 163, 189, 333, 334, 349, 354.

Towards old things;
Towards the herdman-kings who walked the earth and spoke with God,
Towards the wanderers who sought for they knew not what, and found their goal at last;
Towards the men who waited, only waited patiently when all seemed lost,
Many bitter winters of defeat;
Down to the granite of patience
These roots swept, knotted fibrous roots, prying, piercing, seeking,
And drew from the living rock and the living waters about it
The red sap to carry upwards to the sun.

Not proud, but humble,
Only to serve and pass on, to endure to the end through service;
For the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and all that bring not forth good fruit
Shall be cut down on the day to come and cast into the fire.

III

There is silence abroad in the land today,
And in the hearts of men, a deep and anxious silence;
And, because we are still at last, those bronze lips slowly open,
Those hollow and weary eyes take on a gleam of light.
Slowly a patient, firm-syllabled voice cuts through the endless silence
Like laboring oxen that drag a plow through the chaos of rude clay-fields:
"I went forward as the light goes forward in early spring,
But there were also many things which I left behind.

"Tombs that were quiet;
One, of a mother, whose brief light went out in the darkness,
One, of a loved one, the snow on whose grave is long falling,
One, only of a child, but it was mine.

"Have you forgot your graves? Go, question them in anguish,
Listen long to their unstirred lips. From your hostages to silence,

Learn there is no life without death, no dawn without sunsetting,
No victory but to Him who has given all."

IV

The clamor of cannon dies down, the furnace-mouth of the battle is silent.
The midwinter sun dips and descends, the earth takes on afresh its bright colors.
But he whom we mocked and obeyed not, he whom we scorned and mistrusted,
He has descended, like a god, to his rest.

Over the uproar of cities,
Over the million intricate threads of life wavering and crossing,
In the midst of problems we know not, tangling, perplexing, ensnaring,
Rises one white tomb alone.
Beam over it, stars.
Wrap it round, stripes—stripes red for the pain that he bore for you—
Enfold it forever, O flag, rent, soiled, but repaired through your anguish;
Long as you keep him there safe, the nations shall bow to your law.

Strew over him flowers:
Blue forget-me-nots from the north, and the bright pink arbutus
From the east, and from the west rich orange blossoms,
But from the heart of the land take the passion-flower;

Rayed, violet, dim,
With the nails that pierced, the cross that he bore and the circlet,
And beside it there lay also one lonely snow-white magnolia,
Bitter for remembrance of the healing which has passed.

A REBEL

Tie a bandage over his eyes,
And at his feet
Let rifles drearily patter
Their death-prayers of defeat.

Throw a blanket over his body,
It need no longer stir;
Truth will but stand the stronger
For all who died for her.

Now he has broken through
To his own secret place;
Which, if we dared to do,
We would have no power left to look on that dead face.

BEFORE OLYMPUS

Across the sky run streaks of white light, aching;
Across the earth the chattering grass is sprawling;
Across the sea roll troubled gleams awaking,
Across the steeps dark broken shapes are crawling.

We have been scourged with youth, a rod in pickle
To cut the hide from our own hearts. We know
The tree of life is also cursed. We heed
The silent laughter of gray gods of time.

We do not seek the lithe and brittle music
Of swords and flame. We have no more desire
For glory or contempt. The moment flies
Past us, and shouting carries its echo on.

The clank of wheels and pumps, the screech of levers
No longer now afflicts our inmost bearing;
The old wise nightingales have longer ears,
They sing the blooming of wild immortelles.

And through the desolation of great cities
As in a madhouse we go peering where
Black butterflies flit about a carcass. Words
Gallop about the sky. The earth broods like a stone.

Heaven is a blank news-sheet fixed and trembling
Between the knees of God. The grass runs crawling.
The waves of the sea their laughter are dissembling,
But who will reap them when our scythes are falling?

ADVENT

I have no more gold;
I spent it all on foolish songs.
Gold I cannot give to you.

Incense, too, I burned
To the great idols of this world;
I must come with empty hands.

Myrrh I lost
In that darker sepulcher
Where another Christ
Died for man in vain.—

I can only give myself,
I have nothing left but this.
Naked I wait, naked I fall
Into Your Hands, Your Hands.

THE BIRTH OF LUCIFER

Helpless is God in struggling with that star
  Which in derision makes His light less dim;
The evening bids the morning from afar
  To rise and conquer Him;

After nine hours of night the sun, expiring
  Breaks the dark vessel that it fills; and then
Erect against the noon it stands, desiring
  This transience, making us both Gods and men:

Life seeks again its dark and secret places,
Where under the sunset's leveled sword, it keeps
Its rest until rekindled in new faces,
Old worlds awake from their too dreamless sleep.

A NEW HEAVEN

We have our hopes and fears that flout us,
We have our illusions, changeless through the years;
We have our dreams of rest after long struggle,
After our toil is finished, folded hands.
But for those who have fallen in battle,
What Heaven can there be?

Heaven is full of those who can remember
The ebbing-out of life that slowly lingered
At the dark doors of pain;
Heaven is full of those who dropped their burden
At last through weariness;
But these the War has taken
Remember naught but their own exultant youth
Filling their hearts with unaccomplished dreams:
The trumpet-call—then the swift searing darkness
Stilling the proud sad song.

How will these enter in
Our old dull Heaven?
Where we seek only to drowse at ease, unthinking,
Since we are safe at last.
Safe? For these souls who faced a thousand dangers,
And found sly Death that robbed them of their chance,
Ere it befell?
Safe—can a Heaven which is safe and painless,
Ever be Heaven to them?

Somewhere amid the clouds there is the home of thunder;
Thunder is naught to them,
It is a ball, a heavy plaything
They may kick hither and thither with their feet.
Lightning is but a toy—the flaming stars
Are endless camp-fire lights;
And for the silence of eternity,
They too on out-post duty, often heard it speak.

We have the dreams of our fat lives that lead us
To waste our lives;
We have the false hope we are serving others
When it is but ourselves we serve;
Yet these who have never lived, and whose sole service
Was but to die too soon,
Perhaps somewhere are making a new Heaven
Filled with the divine despair and joy this dead earth never
knew.

H. D.

Hilda Doolittle was born September 10, 1886, at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. When she was still a child, her father became Director of the Flower Observatory and the family moved to a suburb in the outskirts of Philadelphia. Hilda Doolittle attended a private school in West Philadelphia; entered Bryn Mawr College in 1904; and went abroad, for what was intended to be a short sojourn, in 1911. After a visit to Italy and France she came to London, joining Ezra Pound and helping to organize the Imagists. Her work (signed "H. D.") began to appear in a few magazines and its unusual quality was recognized at once. Remaining for a while in London, she became one of the leaders of the movement (see Preface), creating through a chiseled verse her flawless evocations of Greek poetry and sculpture. In 1920 she made a long-deferred visit to America, settling on the Californian coast, returning the following year to England. Since 1921 H. D. has lived in a small town in Switzerland on the shore of Lake Geneva.

Her first collection, *Sea Garden*, appeared in 1916; an interval of five years elapsed before the publication of her second volume, *Hymen*, which was printed simultaneously in England and America in 1921.

H. D. was, by all odds, the most important of her group. She was the only one who steadfastly held to the letter as well as the spirit of its *credo*. She was in fact, the only true Imagist. Her poems, capturing the firm delicacy of the Greek models, are like a set of Tanagra figurines. Here, at first glance, the effect is chilling—beauty seems held in a frozen gesture. But it is in this very fixation of light, color and emotion that she achieves intensity. What at first seemed static becomes fluent; the arrested moment glows with a quivering tension.

Observe the poem entitled "Heat." Here, in the fewest possible words, is something beyond the description of heat—here is the effect of it. In these lines one feels the weight and solidity of a midsummer afternoon. So in "The Islands" a propulsion of feeling hurries forward the syllables balancing on light and dark vowels, and what might have been only a list of antique names becomes an outcry.

Her efforts to draw the contemporary world are less happy. She is best in her reflections of clear-cut loveliness in a quietly pagan world; in most of her moods, she seems less a contemporary than an inspired anachronism.

Heliodora and Other Poems appeared in 1924. So much had already been written concerning the form of H. D.'s poetry that it was no longer necessary to expatiate on the unique features of her metric. Even those least impressed by the program of the Imagists readily conceded her exquisite if oversubtle flavor, the stripped purity of her line, the precision of her epithets. But the most apparent feature of *Heliodora*—even more noticeable than its beauties of form—is its intensity. A freely declared passion radiates from lines which are at once ecstatic and austere. Even the most casual reading must convince one that this poet is not, as she first seemed to us, a Greek statue faintly flushed with life, a delightful but detached relic of another world. This is a woman responsive to color and pain, aroused by loveliness, shocked by betrayal, affected by all those manifestations which are too old to be timely, too fresh to be ancient.

Practically all of H. D.'s previous volumes were assembled in *Collected Poems* (1925) which contains not only her original work but the spirited translations from the Odyssey and her flexible expansions of fragmentary phrases of Sappho. A play, *Hippolytus Temporizes,* appeared in 1927. In the later works it is interesting to trace the tightening of form, the approximation of more regular structure, even the introduction of half-candid, half-concealed rhyme.

H. D.'s prose is somewhat more derivative, bearing faint overtones of Gertrude Stein, but it rises above its influences. *Palimpsest* (1926) and *Hedylus* (1928) embody a poet's prose, the former embedding a triptych of interrelated tragedies, actual and intuitive.

OREAD

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines.
Splash your great pines
On our rocks.
Hurl your green over us—
Cover us with your pools of fir.

PEAR TREE

Silver dust
lifted from the earth,
higher than my arms reach,
you have mounted.
O silver,
higher than my arms reach
you front us with great mass;
no flower ever opened
so staunch a white leaf,
no flower ever parted silver
from such rare silver;

O white pear,
your flower-tufts,
thick on the branch,
bring summer and ripe fruits
in their purple hearts.

HEAT

O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air—
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut through the heat—
plow through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

ORCHARD

I saw the first pear
as it fell—

the honey-seeking, golden-banded,
the yellow swarm,
was not more fleet than I,
(spare us from loveliness!)
and I fell prostrate,
crying:
you have flayed us with your blossoms,
spare us the beauty
of fruit-trees!

The honey-seeking
paused not;
the air thundered their song,
and I alone was prostrate.

O rough-hewn
god of the orchard,
I bring you an offering—
do you, alone unbeautiful,
son of the god,
spare us from loveliness:

these fallen hazel-nuts,
stripped late of their green sheaths,
grapes, red-purple,
their berries
dripping with wine;
pomegranates already broken,
and shrunken figs,
and quinces untouched,
I bring you as offering.

SONG

You are as gold
as the half-ripe grain
that merges to gold again,
as white as the white rain
that beats through
the half-opened flowers
of the great flower tufts

thick on the black limbs
of an Illyrian apple bough.

Can honey distill such fragrance
as your bright hair—
for your face is as fair as rain;
yet as rain that lies clear
on white honey-comb
lends radiance to the white wax,
so your hair on your brow
casts light for a shadow.

FROM "LET ZEUS RECORD"

Stars wheel in purple, yours is not so rare
as Hesperus, nor yet so great a star
as bright Aldebaran or Sirius,
nor yet the stained and brilliant one of War;

stars turn in purple, glorious to the sight;
yours is not gracious as the Pleiads are,
nor as Orion's sapphires, luminous;

yet disenchanted, cold, imperious face,
when all the others, blighted, reel and fall,
your star, steel-set, keeps lone and frigid tryst
to freighted ships baffled in wind and blast.

LAIS

Let her who walks in Paphos
take the glass,
let Paphos take the mirror
and the work of frosted fruit,
gold apples set
with silver apple-leaf,
white leaf of silver
wrought with vein of gilt.

Let Paphos lift the mirror;
let her look
into the polished center of the disk.

Let Paphos take the mirror:
did she press
flowerlet of flame-flower
to the lustrous white
of the white forehead?
Did the dark veins beat
a deeper purple
than the wine-deep tint
of the dark flower?

Did she deck black hair,
one evening, with the winter-white
flower of the winter-berry?
Did she look (reft of her lover)
at a face gone white
under the chaplet
of white virgin-breath?

Lais, exultant, tyrannizing Greece,
Lais who kept her lovers in the porch,
lover on lover waiting
(but to creep
where the robe brushed the threshold
where still sleeps Lais),
so she creeps, Lais,
to lay her mirror at the feet
of her who reigns in Paphos.

Lais has left her mirror,
for she sees no longer in its depth
the Lais' self
that laughed exultant,
tyrannizing Greece.

Lais has left her mirror,
for she weeps no longer,
finding in its depth
a face, but other
than dark flame and white
feature of perfect marble.

Lais has left her mirror
(so one wrote)
to her who reigns in Paphos;
Lais who laughed a tyrant over Greece,
Lais who turned the lovers from the porch,
that swarm for whom now
Lais has no use;
Lais is now no lover of the glass,
seeing no more the face as once it was,
wishing to see that face and finding this.

FROM "HALCYON"

("*Bird—loved of sea-men*")

I

I'm not here,
everything's vague, blurred everywhere,
then you are blown
into a room;

the sea comes where a carpet
laid red and purple,
and where the edge showed marble
there is sea-weed;

sedge breaks the wall
where the couch stands,
the hands of strange people.
twisting tassel and fringe

of rich cloth, become clear;
I understand the people,
they aren't hateful but dear;
over all

a shrill wind, clear sky;
O why, why, why
am I fretful, insecure,
why am I vague, unsure

until you are blown,
unexpected, small, quaint, unnoticeable,
a gray gull
into a room.

SONGS FROM CYPRUS

I

Gather for festival
bright weed and purple shell;
make on the holy sand
pattern as one might make
who tread with rose-red heel
a measure
pleasureful;

such as those songs we made
in rose and myrtle shade
where rose and myrtle fell
(shell-petal or rose-shell)
on just such holy sand;
ah, the song
musical;

give me white rose and red;
find me in citron glade
citron of precious weight,
spread gold before her feet,
ah, weave the citron flower;
hail goddess
beautiful.

II

Where is the nightingale,
in what myrrh-wood and dim?
ah, let the night come black,
for we would conjure back
all that enchanted him,
all that enchanted him.

Where is the bird of fire?
in what packed hedge of rose?
in what roofed ledge of flower?
no other creature knows
what magic lurks within,
what magic lurks within.

Bird, bird, bird, bird, we cry,
hear, pity us in pain;
hearts break in the sunlight,
hearts break in daylight rain,
only night heals again,
only night heals again.

HOLY SATYR

Most holy Satyr,
like a goat,
with horns and hooves
to match thy coat
of russet brown,
I make leaf-circlets
and a crown of honey-flowers
for thy throat;
where the amber petals
drip to ivory,
I cut and slip
each stiffened petal
in the rift
of carven petal;
honey horn
has wed the bright
virgin petal of the white
flower cluster: lip to lip
let them whisper,
let them lilt, quivering.

Most holy Satyr,
like a goat,
hear this our song,
accept our leaves,

love-offering,
return our hymn,
like echo fling
a sweet song,
answering note for note.

THE ISLANDS

I

What are the islands to me,
what is Greece,
what is Rhodes, Samos, Chios,
what is Paros facing west,
what is Crete?

What is Samothrace,
rising like a ship,
what is Imbros rending the storm-waves
with its breast?

What is Naxos, Paros, Milos,
what the circle about Lycia,
what the Cyclades'
white necklace?

What is Greece—
Sparta, rising like a rock,
Thebes, Athens,
what is Corinth?

What is Euboia
with its island violets,
what is Euboia, spread with grass,
set with swift shoals,
what is Crete?

What are the islands to me,
what is Greece?

II

What can love of land give to me
that you have not—
what do the tall Spartans know,
and gentler Attic folk?

What has Sparta and her women
more than this?

What are the islands to me
if you are lost—
what is Naxos, Tinos, Andros,
and Delos, the clasp
of the white necklace?

III

What can love of land give to me
that you have not,
what can love of strife break in me
that you have not?

Though Sparta enter Athens,
Thebes wrack Sparta,
each changes as water,
salt, rising to wreak terror
and falling back.

IV

"What has love of land given to you
that I have not?"

I have questioned Tyrians
where they sat
on the black ships,
weighted with rich stuffs;
I have asked the Greeks
from the white ships,
and Greeks from ships whose hulks
lay on the wet sand, scarlet
with great beaks.

I have asked bright Tyrians
and tall Greeks—
"what has love of land given you?"
And they answered—"peace."

V

But Beauty is set apart,
beauty is cast by the sea,
a barren rock,
beauty is set about
with wrecks of ships,
upon our coast, death keeps
the shallows—death waits
clutching toward us
from the deeps.

Beauty is set apart;
the winds that slash its beach,
swirl the coarse sand
upward toward the rocks.

Beauty is set apart
from the islands
and from Greece.

VI

In my garden
the winds have beaten
the ripe lilies;
in my garden, the salt
has wilted the first flakes
of young narcissus,
and the lesser hyacinth,
and the salt has crept
under the leaves of the white hyacinth.

In my garden
even the wind-flowers lie flat,
broken by the wind at last.

VII

What are the islands to me
if you are lost,
what is Paros to me
if your eyes draw back,
what is Milos
if you take fright of beauty,
terrible, tortuous, isolated,
a barren rock?

What is Rhodes, Crete,
what is Paros facing west,
what, white Imbros?

What are the islands to me
if you hesitate,
what is Greece if you draw back
from the terror
and cold splendor of song
and its bleak sacrifice?

LETHE

Nor skin nor hide nor fleece
    Shall cover you,
Nor curtain of crimson nor fine
Shelter of cedar-wood be over you,
    Nor the fir-tree
    Nor the pine.

Nor sight of whin nor gorse
    Nor river-yew,
    Nor fragrance of flowering bush,
Nor wailing of reed-bird to waken you.
    Nor of linnet
    Nor of thrush.

Nor word nor touch nor sight
    Of lover, you
Shall long through the night but for this:
The roll of the full tide to cover you
    Without question,
    Without kiss.

Hazel Hall was born February 7, 1886, in St. Paul, Minnesota, but as a small child was taken to Portland, Oregon, where she remained the rest of her life. Either from the effects of scarlet fever or as the result of a fall, she was unable to walk after she was twelve years old. She never complained. As Ruth Hall, her sister, wrote in a letter to the editor, "The word 'invalid' was anathema in her ears. Although she was forced to spend her days in a wheel chair, she possessed a rare abundance of health, which enabled her to know life concretely, as a satisfaction for her senses, even though it might remain an abstract sorrow for her mind. She lived life thoroughly, admiring its complexities, with a fine relish for the irony which gave a bitter-sweet taste to the whole."

Curtains, her first volume, which appeared in 1921, is, in the main, a book of charming rather than arresting lyrics; it is evident from the poems that her needle was not only a means of support but a refuge for the poet. The fact that she herself could never walk made her extraordinarily sensitive to the tramp or shuffle of feet; her mind seemed filled with the thought of men marching eternally about the earth. And so her second book, *Walkers* (1923), is filled with the wonder of mere pedestrian life, of a boy whacking a stick against a wall, of couples passing at dusk, of feet half-sinking in snow, of children's heels flashing in the sun.

Her third volume, *Cry of Time* (1929), upon which she was at work at the time of her death, contains her finest writing and the poems by which she probably will be remembered longest. These later poems have the appeal of the first two books with an emotional depth which the early volumes barely suggested. Apart from personal associations which make these lines more poignant, the four poems here reprinted—all from her very last manuscripts—are those which no recorder of the period can afford to overlook and which, eventually, will be rediscovered.

Although Hazel Hall was in sound health until a few weeks before her death, she seemed to have a premonition that the end was near before she became critically ill. She died on May 11, 1924. The last two poems which she wrote were "Slow Death" and "Riddle," both of which appeared in *The New Republic* a fortnight after her death.

FLIGHT

A bird may curve across the sky—
A feather of dusk, a streak of song;
And save a space and a bird to fly
There may be nothing all day long.

Flying through a cloud-made place
A bird may tangle east and west,
Maddened with going, crushing space
With the arrow of its breast.

Though never wind nor motion bring
It back again from indefinite lands,
The thin blue shadow of its wing
May cross and cross above your hands.

ANY WOMAN

When there is nothing left but darkness
And the day is like a leaf
Fallen onto sodden grasses,
You have earned a subtle grief.

Never let them take it from you,
Never let them come and say:
Night is made of black gauze; moonlight
Blows the filmy dark away.

You have a right to know the thickness
Of the night upon your face,
To feel the inky blue of nothing
Drift like ashes out of space.

You have a right to lift your fingers
And stare in pity at your hands
That are the exquisite frail mirrors
Of all the mind misunderstands.

Your hand, potent in portrayal,
Falls of its own weight to rest
In a quiet curve of sorrow
On the beating of your breast.

HERE COMES THE THIEF

Here comes the thief
Men nickname Time,
Oh, hide you, leaf,
And hide you, rhyme.

Leaf, he would take you
And leave you rust.
Rhyme, he would flake you
With spotted dust.
Scurry to cover,
Delicate maid
And serious lover.
Girl, bind the braid
Of your burning hair;
He has an eye
For the lusciously fair
Who passes by.
O lover, hide—
Who comes to plunder
Has the crafty stride
Of unheard thunder.
Quick—lest he snatch,
In his grave need,
And sift and match,
Then sow like seed
Your love's sweet grief
On the backward air,
With the rhyme and the leaf
And the maiden's hair.

SLOW DEATH

You need no other death than this
   Slow death that wears your heart away;
It is enough, the death that is
   Your every night, your every day.

It is enough, the sun that slants
   Across your breast, heavy as steel,
Leaving the rust of radiance
   To shape a wound that will not heal.

Enough, the crystal at your lips,
   Wasting you even as it lies—
Vibrant there before it slips
   Away, torn from your mouth like cries.

There will be now, as fumes from wood,
  A passing, yet no new death's care.
You will know only the frustrate mood
  Of breath tarnished to color of air.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

William Rose Benét was born at Fort Hamilton, New York Harbor, February 2, 1886. He was educated at Albany Academy and graduated from Yale in 1907. After various experiences as free-lance writer, publisher's reader, magazine editor and second lieutenant in the U. S. Air Service, Benét became Associate Editor of the New York Post's *Literary Review* in 1920, resigning in 1924 to become one of the founders and editors of *The Saturday Review of Literature.*

The outstanding feature of Benét's verse is its extraordinary versatility; an Oriental imagination runs through his pages. Like the title-poem of his first volume, *Merchants from Cathay* (1913), Benét's volumes vibrate with a vigorous music; they are full of the sonorous stuff that one rolls out crossing wintry fields or tramping a road alone.

But Benét's charm is not confined to the lift and swing of rollicking choruses. His *The Falconer of God* (1914), *The Great White Wall* (1916) and *The Burglar of the Zodiac* (1918) contain decorations bold as they are brilliant; they ring with a strange and spicy music evoked from seemingly casual words. His scope is wide, although he is most at home in fancies which glow with a half-lurid, half-humorous reflection of the grotesque. There are times indeed when Benét seems to be forcing his ingenuity. The poet frequently lets his fantastic Pegasus run away with him, and what started out to be a gallop among the stars ends in a scraping of shins on the pavement. But he is saved by an acrobatic dexterity even when his energy betrays him. *Perpetual Light* (1919), a memorial to his first wife, is, naturally, a more subdued collection.

Moons of Grandeur (1920) represents an appreciable development of Benét's whimsical gift; a combination of Eastern phantasy and Western vigor. Even more arresting are those poems which appeared subsequent to this volume. A firmer line, a cooler condensation may be found in *Man Possessed* (1927), a selection of the best of the previous volumes with many new poems. "Whale" is a particularly brilliant example; "Jesse James" rocks with high spirits and the true balladist's gusto; "Inscription for a Mirror in a Deserted Dwelling," written during the life of his second wife, Elinor Wylie, reflects the poet who wrote it and the poet to whom it was written, while "Sagacity" is a tribute to her memory.

Besides his verse, the older Benét is the author of two novels and several tales for children, and the editor (with Henry Seidel Canby and John Drinkwater) of *Twentieth Century Poetry* (1929).

MERCHANTS FROM CATHAY

How that They came.

Their heels slapped their bumping mules; their fat chaps glowed.
Glory unto Mary, each seemed to wear a crown!
Like sunset their robes were on the wide, white road:
So we saw those mad merchants come dusting into town!

Of their Beasts,

Two paunchy beasts they rode on and two they drove before.
May the Saints all help us, the tiger-stripes they had!
And the panniers upon them swelled full of stuffs and ore!
The square buzzed and jostled at a sight so mad.

And their Boast,

They bawled in their beards, and their turbans they wried.
They stopped by the stalls with curvetting and clatter.
As bronze as the bracken their necks and faces dyed—
And a stave they sat singing, to tell us of the matter.

With its Burthen

"For your silks, to Sugarmago! For your dyes, to Isfahan!
Weird fruits from the Isle o' Lamaree.
But for magic merchandise,
For treasure-trove and spice,
Here's a catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan,
The King of all the Kings across the sea!

And
Chorus.

"Here's a catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan;
For we won through the deserts to his sunset barbican;
And the mountains of his palace no Titan's reach may span
Where he wields his seignorie!

A first
Stave
Fearsome,

"Red-as-blood skins of panthers, so bright against the sun
On the walls of the halls where his pillared state is set
They daze with a blaze no man may look upon.
And with conduits of beverage those floors run wet.

And a second
Right hard
To stomach

"His wives stiff with riches, they sit before him there.
Bird and beast at his feast make song and clapping cheer.
And jugglers and enchanters, all walking on the air,
Make fall eclipse and thunder—make moons and suns appear!

And a third,
Which is a
Laughable
Thing.

"Once the Chan, by his enemies sore-prest, and sorely spent,
Lay, so they say, in a thicket 'neath a tree
Where the howl of an owl vexed his foes from their intent:
Then that fowl for a holy bird of reverence made he!

We gape to
Hear them end,

"A catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan!
Pastmasters of disasters, our desert caravan
Won through all peril to his sunset barbican,
Where he wields his seignorie!
And crowns he gave us! We end where we began:
A catch and a carol to the great, grand Chan!
The King of all the Kings across the sea!"

And are in Terror,

Those mad, antic Merchants! . . . Their stripèd beasts did beat
The market-square suddenly with hooves of beaten gold!
The ground yawned gaping and flamed beneath our feet!
They plunged to Pits Abysmal with their wealth untold!

And dread it is Devil's Work!

And some say the Chan himself in anger dealt the stroke—
For sharing of his secrets with silly, common folk:
But Holy, Blessed Mary, preserve us as you may
Lest once more those mad Merchants come chanting from Cathay!

NIGHT

Let the night keep
What the night takes,
Sighs buried deep,
Ancient heart-aches,
Groans of the lover,
Tears of the lost;
Let day discover not
All the night cost!

Let the night keep
Love's burning bliss,
Drowned in deep sleep
Whisper and kiss,
Thoughts like white flowers
In hedges of May;
Let such deep hours not
Fade with the day!

Monarch is night
Of all eldest things,
Pain and affright,
Rapturous wings;

Night the crown, night the sword
Lifted to smite.
Kneel to your overlord,
Children of night!

THE FAWN IN THE SNOW

The brown-dappled fawn
Bereft of the doe
Shivers in blue shadow
Of the glaring snow,

His whole world bright
As a jewel, and hard,
Diamond white,
Turquoise barred.

The trees are black,
Their needles gold,
Their boughs crack
In the keen cold.

The brown-dappled fawn
Bereft of the doe
Trembles and shudders
At the bright snow.

The air whets
The warm throat,
The frost frets
At the smooth coat.

Brown agate eyes
Opened round
Agonize
At the cold ground,

At the cold heaven
Enameled pale,
At the earth shriven
By the snowy gale,

At magic glitter
Burning to blind,
At beauty bitter
As an almond rind.

Fawn, fawn,
Seek for your south,
For kind dawn
With her cool mouth,

For green sod
With gold and blue
Dappled, as God
Has dappled you, . . .

The shivering fawn
Paws at the snow.
South and dawn
Lie below;

Richness and mirth,
Dearth forgiven,
A happy earth,
A warm heaven.

The sleet streams;
The snow flies;
The fawn dreams
With wide brown eyes.

WHALE

Rain, with a silver flail;
Sun, with a golden ball;
Ocean, wherein the whale
Swims minnow-small;

I heard the whale rejoice
And cynic sharks attend;
He cried with a purple voice,
"The Lord is my Friend!"

"With flanged and battering tail,
With huge and dark baleen,
He said, 'Let there be Whale
In the Cold and Green!'

"He gave me a water-spout,
A side like a harbor wall;
The Lord from cloud looked out
And planned it all.

"With glittering crown atilt
He leaned on a glittering rail;
He said, 'Where Sky is spilt,
Let there be Whale.'

"Tier upon tier of wings
Blushed and blanched and bowed;
Phalanxed fiery things
Cried in the cloud;

"Million-eyed was the mirk
At the plan not understood;
But the Lord looked on his work
And saw it was good.

"He gave me marvelous girth
For the curve of back and breast,
And a tiny eye of mirth
To hide His jest.

"He made me a floating hill,
A plunging deep-sea mine.
This was the Lord's will;
The Lord is Divine.

"I magnify his name
In earthquake and eclipse,
In weltering molten flame
And wrecks of ships,

"In waves that lick the moon;
I, the plow of the sea!
I am the Lord's boon;
The Lord made me!"

The sharks barked from beneath,
As the whale rollicked and roared,
"Yes, and our grinning teeth,
Was it not the Lord?"

Then question pattered like hail
From fishes large and small.
"The Lord is mighty," said Whale,
"The Lord made all!

"His is a mammoth jest
Life may never betray;
He has laid it up in His breast
Till Judgment Day;

"But high when combers foam
And tower their last of all,
My power shall haul you home
Through Heaven wall.

"A trumpet then in the gates,
To the ramps a thundering drum,
I shall lead you where He waits
For His Whale to come.

"Where His cloudy seat is placed
On high in an empty dome,
I shall trail the Ocean abased
In chains of foam,

"Unwieldy, squattering dread.
Where the blazing cohorts stand
At last I shall lift my head
As it feels His hand.

"Then wings with a million eyes
Before mine eyes shall quail:
'Look you, all Paradise,
I was His Whale!'"

I heard the Whale rejoice,
As he splayed the waves to a fan:
"And the Lord shall say with His Voice,
'*Leviathan!*'

"The Lord shall say with His Tongue,
'Now let all Heaven give hail
To my Jest when I was young,
To my very Whale.'"

Then the Whale careered in the Sea,
He floundered with flailing tail;
Flourished and rollicked he,
"Aha! Mine Empery!
For the Lord said, 'Let Whale Be!'
And there Was Whale!"

BRAZEN TONGUE

Quick in spite I said unkind
Words that should have struck me blind.
Flatly on my eardrums rung
The raucous echoes of my tongue.

Burnished bees in an iron hive
Seemed my wits, and scarce alive
I sat with elbows on my knees
Sick with silence like disease.

Slowly through the solid floor
I sank, till there was nothing more
Than a grease-spot of me there
Shadowed by the upright chair.

O last night I lay awake
Parrying darkness for your sake,
Like an armory glittered bright
The lilied hours of our delight!

O this morning I intended
All the virtues this has ended,
Golden as a new-coined planet!
Now I wither into granite.

Tongue, you are a tongue of fire,
Shriveling like a white-hot wire,
Blackening like a dragon's breath
Flower-fluttering fields with death.

Tongue, you are a tongue of brass
In the jawbone of an ass,
Slaying what was most divine,—
Not the reeking Philistine.

So, she dug me from my quarry;
Came and said that she was sorry;
Sprinkled me with words like myrrh;
So I sat and stared at her;

And so I climb the burning mountain
And sit beside the lava fountain,
And, white with ashes, wonder why
In the devil I am I.

JESSE JAMES

(*A Design in Red and Yellow for a Nickel Library*)

Jesse James was a two-gun man,
        (*Roll on, Missouri!*)
Strong-arm chief of an outlaw clan.
        (*From Kansas to Illinois!*)
He twirled an old Colt forty-five;
        (*Roll on, Missouri!*)
They never took Jesse James alive.
        (*Roll, Missouri, roll!*)

Jesse James was King of the Wes';
        (*Cataracts in the Missouri!*)
He'd a di'mon' heart in his lef' breas';
        (*Brown Missouri rolls!*)

He'd a fire in his heart no hurt could stifle;
(*Thunder, Missouri!*)
Lion eyes an' a Winchester rifle.
(*Missouri, roll down!*)

Jesse James rode a pinto hawse;
Come at night to a water-cawse;
Tetched with the rowel that pinto's flank;
She sprung the torrent from bank to bank.

Jesse rode through a sleepin' town;
Looked the moonlit street both up an' down;
Crack-crack-crack, the street ran flames
An' a great voice cried, "I'm Jesse James!"

Hawse an' afoot they're after Jess!
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)
Spurrin' an' spurrin'—but he's gone Wes'.
(*Brown Missouri rolls!*)
He was ten foot tall when he stood in his boots;
(*Lightnin' like the Missouri!*)
More'n a match fer sich galoots.
(*Roll, Missouri, roll!*)

Jesse James rode outa the sage;
Roun' the rocks come the swayin' stage;
Straddlin' the road a giant stan's
An' a great voice bellers, "Throw up yer han's!"

Jesse raked in the di'mon' rings,
The big gold watches an' the yuther things;
Jesse divvied 'em then an' thar
With a cryin' child had lost her mar.

They're creepin'; they're crawlin', they're stalkin' Jess;
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)
They's a rumor he's gone much further Wes';
(*Roll, Missouri, roll!*)
They's word of a cayuse hitched to the bars
(*Ruddy clouds on Missouri!*)
Of a golden sunset that busts into stars.
(*Missouri, roll down!*)

Jesse James rode hell fer leather;
He was a hawse an' a man together;
In a cave in a mountain high up in air
He lived with a rattlesnake, a wolf, an' a bear.

Jesse's heart was as sof' as a woman;
Fer guts an' stren'th he was sooper-human;
He could put six shots through a woodpecker's eye
And take in one swaller a gallon o' rye.

They sought him here an' they sought him there,
        (*Roll on, Missouri!*)
But he strides by night through the ways of the air;
        (*Brown Missouri rolls!*)
They say he was took an' they say he is dead,
        (*Thunder, Missouri!*)
But he ain't—he's a sunset overhead!
        (*Missouri down to the sea!*)

Jesse James was a Hercules.
When he went through the woods he tore up the trees.
When he went on the plains he smoked the groun'
An' the hull lan' shuddered fer miles aroun'.

Jesse James wore a red bandanner
That waved on the breeze like the Star Spangled Banner;
In seven states he cut up dadoes.
He's gone with the buffler an' the desperadoes.

Yes, Jesse James was a two-gun man
        (*Roll on, Missouri!*)
The same as when this song began;
        (*From Kansas to Illinois!*)
An' when you see a sunset bust into flames
        (*Lightnin' like the Missouri!*)
Or a thunderstorm blaze—that's Jesse James!
        (*Hear that Missouri roll!*)

ETERNAL MASCULINE

Neither will I put myself forward as others may do,
Neither, if you wish me to flatter, will I flatter you;
I will look at you grimly, and so you will know I am true.

Neither when all do agree and lout low and salute,
And you are beguiled by the tree and devout for the fruit,
Will I seem to be aught but the following eyes of a brute.

I will stand to one side and sip of my hellebore wine,
I will snarl and deride the antics and airs of the swine;
You will glance in your pride, but I will deny you a sign.

I will squint at the moon and be peaceful because I am dead,
I will whistle a tune and be glad of the harshness I said.
O you will come soon, when the stars are a mist overhead!

You will come, with eyes fierce; you will act a defiant surprise.
Quick lightings will pierce to our hearts from the pain in our eyes,
Standing strained and averse, with the trembling of love that defies.

And then I will know, by the heartbreaking turn of your head,
My madness brought low in a hell that is spared to the dead.
The upas will grow from the poisonous words that I said;

From under its shade out to where like a statue you stand,
Without wish to evade, I will reach, I will cry with my hand,
With my spirit dismayed, with my eyes and my mouth full of sand. . . .

INSCRIPTION FOR A MIRROR IN A DESERTED DWELLING

Set silver cone to tulip flame!
The mantel mirror floats with night
Reflecting still green watery light.
The sconces glimmer. If she came
Like silence through the shadowy wall
Where walls are wading in the moon
The dark would tremble back to June.
So faintly now the moonbeams fall,
So soft this silence, that the verge
Of speech is reached. Remote and pale
As through some faint viridian veil
The lovely lineaments emerge,

The clearly amber eyes, the tint
Of pearl and faintest rose, the hair
To lacquered light, a silken snare
Of devious bronze, the tiny dint
With which her maker mocked the years
Beneath her lip imprinting praise.
Dim flower of desecrating days,
The old reflection, strange with tears,
Is gazing out upon the gloom,
Is widening eyes to find the light
In reminiscence, in the night
Of this foregone, forgotten room.

And you, the watcher, with your eyes
As wide as hers in dark distress,
Who never knew her loveliness
But guess through glass her shadowy guise,
For you around the glass I trace
This secret writing, that will burn
Like witch-fire should her shade return
To haunt you with that wistful face.

At least no gesturing figures pass;
Here is no tragic immanence
Of all the scenes of small events
That pantomimed before the glass.
No bliss, no passion, no despair,
No other actor lingers now;
The moonlight on a lifted brow
Is all,—the eyes so wide aware
Of clouds that pass with stars, and suns,
Of mystery that pales the cheek,
Of all the heart could never speak,
Of joy and pain so vivid once,
That ceased with music and the lights,
Dimming to darkness and repose. . . .
Lean then and kiss that ghostly rose
That was her face, this night of nights,—
And know the vision fled indeed,
The mirror's surface smooth and cold,
The words unbreathed, the tale untold,
The past unpiteous to your need!

SAGACITY

We knew so much; when her beautiful eyes could lighten,
Her beautiful laughter follow our phrase;
Or the gaze go hard with pain, the lips tighten,
On the bitterer days.
Oh, ours was all knowing then, all generous displaying.
Such wisdom we had to show!
And now there is merely silence, silence, silence saying
All we did not know.

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

John Hall Wheelock was born at Far Rockaway, Long Island, in 1886. He was graduated from Harvard, receiving his B.A. in 1908, and finished his studies at the Universities of Göttingen and Berlin, 1908-10.

Wheelock's first book is, in many respects, his best. *The Human Fantasy* (1911) sings with the voice of youth—youth vibrantly, even vociferously, in love with existence. Rhapsodic and obviously influenced by Whitman and Henley, these lines beat bravely; headlong ecstasy rises from pages whose refrain is "Splendid it is to live and glorious to die." *The Beloved Adventure* (1912) is less powerful, but scarcely less passionate. Lyric after lyric moves by its athletic music and affirmation.

Wheelock's subsequent volumes are less individualized. *Love and Liberation* (1913) and *Dust and Light* (1919) are long dilutions of the earlier strain. The music is still here, but most of the vigor has gone. Wheelock has allowed himself to be exploited by his own fluency and the result is lyrical monotony. Yet vast stretches of two hundred and thirty unvaried love-songs cannot bury a dozen vivid poems which lie, half-concealed, in a waste of verbiage.

The Black Panther (1922) furnishes additional proof that though Wheelock's star may have waned it did not die. In this volume the poet's gift has assumed greater dignity; the flashing athleticism has matured into a steady fervor, the passionate exulting has grown into an exaltation of passion. With the exception of a few innocuous songs, there is revealed a graver music than Wheelock has ever accomplished. In the longer poems he expresses the paradox of conflict and consent: the philosophy of the single Consciousness which reconciles terror and tenderness, murder and laughter, dawn and destruction—"Life, the dreadful, the magnificent." Affirmation sounds the key-note throughout.

The Bright Doom (1927), although the smallest of Wheelock's volumes, is full of his best and worst. No poem is bad; no poem is quite good enough. The total effect is of desperate sincerity lost in foggy generalities, afloat but floundering in a wash of rhetoric.

SUNDAY EVENING IN THE COMMON

Look—on the topmost branches of the world
The blossoms of the myriad stars are thick;
Over the huddled rows of stone and brick,
A few, sad wisps of empty smoke are curled
Like ghosts, languid and sick.

One breathless moment now the city's moaning
Fades, and the endless streets seem vague and dim;
There is no sound around the whole world's rim,
Save in the distance a small band is droning
Some desolate old hymn.

Van Wyck, how often have we been together
When this same moment made all mysteries clear;
—The infinite stars that brood above us here,
And the gray city in the soft June weather,
So tawdry and so dear!

TRIUMPH OF LOVE

I shake my hair in the wind of morning
For the joy within me that knows no bounds,
I echo backward the vibrant beauty
Wherewith heaven's hollow lute resounds.

I shed my song on the feet of all men,
On the feet of all shed out like wine,
On the whole and the hurt I shed my bounty,
The beauty within me that is not mine.

Turn not away from my song, nor scorn me,
Who bear the secret that holds the sky
And the stars together, but know within me
There speaks another more wise than I.

Nor spurn me here from your heart, to hate me!
Yet hate me here if you will—not so
Myself you hate, but the Love within me
That loves you, whether you would or no.

Here love returns with love to the lover,
And beauty unto the heart thereof,
And hatred unto the heart of the hater,
Whether he would or no, with love!

NIRVANA

Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Over the stars that murmur as they go
Lighting your lattice-window far below;
And every star some of the glory spells
Whereof I know.

I have forgotten you long, long ago,
Like the sweet silver singing of thin bells
Vanished, or music fading faint and low.
Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Who loved you so.

LOVE AND LIBERATION

Lift your arms to the stars
And give an immortal shout;
Not all the veils of darkness
Can put your beauty out!

You are armed with love, with love,
Nor all the powers of Fate
Can touch you with a spear,
Nor all the hands of hate.

What of good and evil,
Hell and Heaven above—
Trample them with love!
Ride over them with love!

EARTH

Grasshopper, your fairy song
And my poem alike belong
To the dark and silent earth
From which all poetry has birth.
All we say and all we sing
Is but as the murmuring
Of that drowsy heart of hers
When from her deep dream she stirs:
If we sorrow, or rejoice,
You and I are but her voice.

Deftly does the dust express
In mind her hidden loveliness,
And from her cool silence stream
The cricket's cry and Dante's dream;
For the earth that breeds the trees
Breeds cities too, and symphonies.
Equally her beauty flows
Into a savior, or a rose—
Looks down in dream, and from above
Smiles at herself in Jesus' love.
Christ's love and Homer's art
Are but the workings of her heart;
Through Leonardo's hand she seeks
Herself, and through Beethoven speaks
In holy thunderings around
The awful message of the ground.

The serene and humble mold
Does in herself all selves enfold—
Kingdoms, destinies, and creeds,
Great dreams, and dauntless deeds,
Science that metes the firmament,
The high, inflexible intent
Of one for many sacrificed—
Plato's brain, the heart of Christ;
All love, all legend, and all lore
Are in the dust forevermore.

Even as the growing grass,
Up from the soil religions pass,
And the field that bears the rye
Bears parables and prophecy.
Out of the earth the poem grows
Like the lily, or the rose;
And all man is, or yet may be,
Is but herself in agony
Toiling up the steep ascent
Toward the complete accomplishment
When all dust shall be, the whole
Universe, one conscious soul.

Yea, the quiet and cool sod
Bears in her breast the dream of God.
If you would know what earth is, scan
The intricate, proud heart of man,
Which is the earth articulate,
And learn how holy and how great,
How limitless and how profound
Is the nature of the ground—
How without terror or demur
We may entrust ourselves to her
When we are wearied out and lay
Our faces in the common clay.

For she is pity, she is love,
All wisdom, she, all thoughts that move
About her everlasting breast
Till she gathers them to rest:
All tenderness of all the ages,
Seraphic secrets of the sages,
Vision and hope of all the seers,
All prayer, all anguish, and all tears
Are but the dust that from her dream
Awakes, and knows herself supreme—
Are but earth, when she reveals
All that her secret heart conceals
Down in the dark and silent loam,
Which is ourselves, asleep, at home.

Yea, and this, my poem, too,
Is part of her as dust and dew,
Wherein herself she doth declare
Through my lips, and say her prayer.

THIS QUIET DUST

Here in my curving hands I cup
This quiet dust; I lift it up.
Here is the mother of all thought;
Of this the shining heavens are wrought,
The laughing lips, the feet that rove,
The face, the body, that you love:
Mere dust, no more, yet nothing less,
And this has suffered consciousness,
Passion, and terror, this again
Shall suffer passion, death, and pain.

For, as all flesh must die, so all,
Now dust, shall live. 'Tis natural;
Yet hardly do I understand—
Here in the hollow of my hand
A bit of God Himself I keep,
Between two vigils fallen asleep.

JOYCE KILMER

(Alfred) Joyce Kilmer was born at New Brunswick, New Jersey, December 6, 1886. He was graduated from Rutgers College in 1904 and received his A.B. from Columbia in 1906. After leaving Columbia he became, in rapid succession, instructor of Latin at Morristown High School, editor of a journal for horsemen, book salesman, book-reviewer, lexicographer, esthete, interviewer, socialist and churchman.

After Kilmer became converted to Catholicism his conception of the church was the Church Militant. "His thought," writes his biographer, Robert Cortes Holliday, "dwelt continually on warrior-saints. . . . As he saw it, there was no question as to his duty." In 1917 Kilmer joined the Officers' Reserve Training Corps, but he soon resigned from this. In less than three weeks after America entered the World War, he enlisted as a private in the Seventh Regiment, National Guard, New York. Shortly before the regiment left New York for Spartanburg, South Carolina, Kilmer was transferred at his own request to the 165th Infantry. In spite of his avowed militancy, Kilmer was "a poet trying to be a soldier"; he made no effort to glorify war, his one hope was to wring some spiritual satisfaction out of the brutality.

On July 28, 1918, the five-day battle for the mastery of the heights beyond the river Ourcq was begun. Two days later Sergeant Kilmer was killed in action.

Death came before the poet had developed or even matured his gifts. His first volume, *Summer of Love* (1911), is wholly imitative; it is full of reflections of a dozen other sources, "a broken bundle of mirrors." *Trees and Other Poems* (1914) contains the title-poem by which Kilmer is best known and, though various influences are still strong (one cannot miss the borrowed accents of Patmore, Belloc, Chesterton, Housman and—*vide* "Martin"—E. A. Robinson), a refreshing candor brightens the lines. *Main Street and Other Poems* (1917) is less derivative; the simplicity is less self-conscious though the note struck is a familiar one.

Besides his own poetry, Kilmer edited a selection of *Verses* by Hilaire Belloc (1916) and *Dreams and Images*, an anthology of Catholic poets (1917).

TREES

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

MARTIN

When I am tired of earnest men,
  Intense and keen and sharp and clever,
Pursuing fame with brush or pen
  Or counting metal disks forever,
Then from the halls of shadowland
  Beyond the trackless purple sea
Old Martin's ghost comes back to stand
  Beside my desk and talk to me.

Still on his delicate pale face
  A quizzical thin smile is showing,
His cheeks are wrinkled like fine lace,
  His kind blue eyes are gay and glowing.
He wears a brilliant-hued cravat,
  A suit to match his soft gray hair,
A rakish stick, a knowing hat,
  A manner blithe and debonair.

How good that he who always knew
  That being lovely was a duty,
Should have gold halls to wander through
  And should himself inhabit beauty.
How like his old unselfish way
  To leave those halls of splendid mirth
And comfort those condemned to stay
  Upon the bleak and somber earth.

Some people ask: What cruel chance
  Made Martin's life so sad a story?
Martin? Why, he exhaled romance
  And wore an overcoat of glory.
A fleck of sunlight in the street,
  A horse, a book, a girl who smiled,—
Such visions made each moment sweet
  For this receptive, ancient child.

Because it was old Martin's lot
  To be, not make, a decoration,
Shall we then scorn him, having not
  His genius of appreciation?

Rich joy and love he got and gave;
  His heart was merry as his dress.
Pile laurel wreaths upon his grave
  Who did not gain, but was, success.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL

Shaemas O'Sheel (Shields) was born September 19, 1886, in New York City. After graduating from high school, he revived the ancient Gaelic form of his family name and identified himself with the cause of Ireland in America.

O'Sheel's two volumes, *The Blossomy Bough* (1911) and *The Light Feet of Goats* (1915), owe their impetus to the Celtic renascence and to W. B. Yeats in particular. But O'Sheel's poetry, although influenced, is no slavish copy. Ancestry speaks through him with unmistakable accents, making him the typical Irish bard of whom Chesterton has written:

For the great Gaels of Ireland
  Are the men that God made mad;
For all their wars are merry
  And all their songs are sad.

A recurring if sometimes too determined mysticism and a muffled heroism individualize his work, which O'Sheel critically revised in *Jealous of Dead Leaves* (1928). He cut his one hundred and twenty-seven poems to forty-two, saying, in a modest foreword, "Maturing judgment has, down the years, cast out more and more of them, and wrought considerable changes in many. . . . In the first lyric rapture of youth I literally flowed verse as a spring flows water, and I called it poetry; but now poetry has become a high and distant goal, and a poem seems a kind of miracle." In the following two poems O'Sheel is not far from that goal.

THEY WENT FORTH TO BATTLE, BUT THEY ALWAYS FELL

They went forth to battle, but they always fell;
  Their eyes were fixed above the sullen shields;
Nobly they fought and bravely, but not well,
And sank heart-wounded by a subtle spell.
  They knew not fear that to the foeman yields,
  They were not weak, as one who vainly wields
A futile weapon; yet the sad scrolls tell
How on the hard-fought field they always fell.

It was a secret music that they heard,
A sad sweet plea for pity and for peace;
And that which pierced the heart was but a word,
Though the white breast was red-lipped where the sword
Pressed a fierce cruel kiss, to put surcease
On its hot thirst, but drank a hot increase.
Ah, they by some strange troubling doubt were stirred,
And died for hearing what no foeman heard.

They went forth to battle, but they always fell;
Their might was not the might of lifted spears;
Over the battle-clamor came a spell
Of troubling music, and they fought not well.
Their wreaths are willows and their tribute, tears;
Their names are old sad stories in men's ears;
Yet they will scatter the red hordes of Hell,
Who went to battle forth and always fell.

HE WHOM A DREAM HATH POSSESSED

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of doubting,
For mist and the blowing of winds and the mouthing of words he scorns.
No sinuous speech and smooth he hears, but a knightly shouting,
And never comes darkness down, yet he greeteth a million morns.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of roaming.
All roads and the flowing of waves and the speediest flight he knows,
But wherever his feet are set his soul is forever homing,
And going he comes, and coming he heareth a call and goes.

He whom a dream hath possessed knoweth no more of sorrow.
At death and the dropping of leaves and the fading of suns he smiles,
For a dream remembers no past and takes no thought of a morrow,
And staunch amid seas of doom a dream sets the ultimate isles.

He whom a dream hath possessed treads the impalpable
marches.
From the dust of the day's long road he leaps to a laughing
star,
And the ruin of worlds that fall he views from eternal arches,
And rides God's battlefield in a flashing and golden car.

ROY HELTON

Roy Helton was born at Washington, D. C., in 1886. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1908. He studied art —and found he was color-blind. He spent two years at inventions —and found he had no business sense. After a few more experiments he became a schoolmaster in West Philadelphia and at the Penn Charter School in Germantown.

Helton's first volume, *Youth's Pilgrimage* (1915), is a strange, mystical affair, full of vague symbolism and purple patches. *Outcasts in Beulah Land* (1918) is entirely different in theme and treatment. This is a much starker verse, direct and sharp in its effect.

Helton became intimately connected with primitive backgrounds, spending a great part of his time in the mountains of South Carolina and Kentucky. His later verse shows the influence of this intimacy, a spirit which crept into his fanciful prose, *The Early Adventures of Peacham Grew* (1925), a story which unites quaintness and tragedy in a delicate chronicle of boyhood.

"Old Christmas Morning" is obviously a Kentucky Mountain dialogue in which, not so obviously, Helton has introduced an element rare in modern verse. Told with the directness of an old ballad, this drama of the night twelve days after the universally celebrated Christmas unfolds a ghost story in which the surprise is heightened by the skillful suspensions. "Lonesome Water" is a direct communication in the vernacular. Asked to furnish a glossary, Helton wrote, "It is true that the ballads need footnotes, a living abomination. Yet to suppress the living tongue would be still worse. I have tried to use only the common and most general mountain words, despising that preciosity of folk-talk dug out and patched together which is now a fashion. . . . *Sang:* a universal Southernmountain word for Gin Seng wherever the weed is grown or picked. *Trace:* a trail or footpath. *Pretties:* any sort of toy or decoration. *Uses:* lives."

OLD CHRISTMAS MORNING

(*A Kentucky Mountain Ballad*)

"Where you coming from, Lomey Carter,
  So airly over the snow?
And what's them pretties you got in your hand,
  And where you aiming to go?

"Step in, Honey: Old Christmas morning
  I ain't got nothing much;
Maybe a bite of sweetness and corn bread,
  A little ham meat and such.

"But come in, Honey! Sally Anne Barton's
  Hungering after your face.
Wait till I light my candle up:
  Set down! There's your old place.

"Now where you been so airly this morning?"
  "Graveyard, Sally Anne.
Up by the trace in the salt lick meadows
  Where Taulbe kilt my man."

"Taulbe ain't to home this morning . . .
  I can't scratch up a light:
Dampness gets on the heads of the matches;
  But I'll blow up the embers bright."

"Needn't trouble. I won't be stopping:
  Going a long ways still."
"You didn't see nothing, Lomey Carter,
  Up on the graveyard hill?"

"What should I see there, Sally Anne Barton?"
  "Well, sperits do walk last night."
"There were an elder bush a-blooming
  While the moon still give some light."

“Yes, elder bushes, they bloom, Old Christmas,
And critters kneel down in their straw.
Anything else up in the graveyard?”

“One thing more I saw:
I saw my man with his head all bleeding
Where Taulbe’s shot went through.”

“What did he say?”

“He stooped and kissed me.”

“What did he say to you?”

“Said, Lord Jesus forguv your Taulbe;
But he told me another word;
He said it soft when he stooped and kissed me.
That were the last I heard.”

“Taulbe ain’t to home this morning.”

“I know that, Sally Anne,
For I kilt him, coming down through the meadow
Where Taulbe kilt my man.

“I met him upon the meadow trace
When the moon were fainting fast,
And I had my dead man’s rifle gun
And kilt him as he come past.”

“But I heard two shots.”

“ ’Twas his was second:
He shot me ’fore he died:
You’ll find us at daybreak, Sally Anne Barton:
I’m laying there dead at his side.”

LONESOME WATER

Drank lonesome water:
Warn’t but a tad then
Up in a laurel thick
Digging for sang;
Came on a place where
The stones were hollow,
Something below them
Tinkled and rang.

Dug whar I heard it
Drippling below me:
Should a knowd better,
Should a been wise;
Leant down and drank it,
Clutching and gripping
The over hung cliv
With the ferns in my eyes.

Tasted of heart leaf
And that smells the sweetest,
Pawpaw and spice bush
And wild brier rose;
Must a been counting
The heels of the spruce pines,
And neighboring round
Whar angelica grows.

I'd drunk lonesome water,
I knowed in a minute:
Never larnt nothing
From then till today:
Nothing worth larning
Nothing worth knowing,
I'm bound to the hills
And I can't get away.

Mean sort of dried up old
Ground hoggy fellow,
Laying out cold here
Watching the sky;
Pore as a hipporwill,
Bent like a grass blade;
Counting up stars
Till they count too high.

I know whar the gray foxes
Uses up yander:
Know what will cure you
Of tisic and chills,

But I never been way from here,
Never got going;
I've drunk lonesome water.
I'm bound to the hills.

DAVID MORTON

David Morton was born at Elkton, Kentucky, February 21, 1886. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1909, engaging in newspaper work immediately thereafter. Aften ten years of writing for various papers in the South, Morton came to New Jersey, where he lived, teaching English at Morristown High School, until 1924, when he went to teach at Amherst.

The greater part of Morton's work is in the sonnet form, bringing to it a certain vague charm which, after many repetitions, tends to become cloying. The best of his verses are to be found in his first volume, *Ships in Harbor and Other Poems* (1921).

Harvest (1924) proves that Morton has mastered his craft as a maker of sonnets. Unfortunately, it proves nothing more: the lines are smooth, fluently phrased, but with few individual images. There is a frail grace of thought, but no impact of personality, no reflection of experience. As has already been stated, it is evident that Morton has learned the technique of his favorite form. It is also evident that he has learned it entirely too well.

SYMBOLS

Beautiful words, like butterflies, blow by,
   With what swift colors on their fragile wings!—
Some that are less articulate than a sigh,
   Some that were names of ancient, lovely things.
What delicate careerings of escape,
   When they would pass beyond the baffled reach,
To leave a haunting shadow and a shape,
   Eluding still the careful traps of speech.

And I who watch and listen, lie in wait,
   Seeing the cloudy cavalcades blow past,
Happy if some bright vagrant, soon or late,
   May venture near the snares of sound, at last—
Most fortunate captor if, from time to time,
One may be taken, trembling, in a rhyme.

OLD SHIPS

There is a memory stays upon old ships,
A weightless cargo in the musty hold,—
Of bright lagoons and prow-caressing lips,
Of stormy midnights,—and a tale untold.
They have remembered islands in the dawn,
And windy capes that tried their slender spars,
And tortuous channels where their keels have gone,
And calm blue nights of stillness and the stars.

Ah, never think that ships forget a shore,
Or bitter seas, or winds that made them wise;
There is a dream upon them, evermore;
And there be some who say that sunk ships rise
To seek familiar harbors in the night,
Blowing in mists, their spectral sails like light.

ANNE SINGLETON

Anne Singleton (the pseudonym under which a well-known anthropologist writes her poetry) was born in New York City in 1887. After finishing her schooling she spent a year in Europe, chiefly in Florence and Dresden. Her home has been in New York City for many years, but she divides time with New Mexico. Her verses have been published chiefly in *The Nation*, in *Poetry*, and in *The Measure*.

Anne Singleton's manner is influenced but interesting; her condensations do not conceal the accents of Léonie Adams and Louise Bogan, but her metaphysics are her own.

BUT THE SON OF MAN

Foxes have holes, and in the wintry weather
Save themselves warm at price of breath and bone;
Playing to shortened strength a shortened tether,
Taking to breast a stone.

Their light feet tranced, their blood become as earthy
As sodden marshes when the flood is gone,
They sleep, not knowing bereavement, content, worthy,
The ecstasy withdrawn.

So at the winter of the blood we straighten
Our limbs to quiet, crying flesh to find
Oblivion as the foxes', sunforsaken,
Deaf and dumb and blind.

UNSHADOWED POOL

You are a pool unshadowed by cast luster,
Crystal as air, having no skill to hold
Skies that are cloudy petaled, and the rushes blowing,
Intricate patterns and sun-aureoled.

Pools should be spread with design caught at heaven,
Laced by near stems, and taking the quick bird.
They should be garmented with far-sought garments
Lest any come there and find the pool unstirred;

Lest, at arm's length, pebble to pebble lying,
Life's farthest depths show clear as whitened bone,
Nothing be water-misted, nothing secret,
Past the rent altar veil, the common stone.

ORRICK JOHNS

Orrick Johns was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1887. He schooled himself to be an advertising copy writer, his creative work being kept as an avocation.

Asphalt and Other Poems (1917) is a queer mixture. Cheap stanzas crowd against lines of singular beauty; poor dialect verse elbows lyrics that are without a false note. The same incongruity is evident in *Black Branches* (1920), where much that is strained and artificial mingles with poetry that is spontaneous. At his best, notably in the refreshing "Country Rhymes," Johns is a true singer, a lyricist of no small stature.

Although Johns' long poem "Second Avenue" won the first prize offered by the editor of *The Lyric Year* (1912), the anthology which first brought to light Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Renascence," his more representative work is entirely in the short measure. *Wild Plum* (1926) assembles the best of his lyrics, which are not without searching moments. The simplicities are genuine and such songs as "The Interpreter," "Little Things" and "Wild Plum" are not easily forgotten.

THE INTERPRETER

In the very early morning when the light was low
She got all together and she went like snow,
Like snow in the springtime on a sunny hill,
And we were only frightened and can't think still.

We can't think quite that the katydids and frogs
And the little crying chickens and the little grunting hogs,
And the other living things that she spoke for to us
Have nothing more to tell her since it happened thus.

She never is around for any one to touch,
But of ecstasy and longing she too knew much . . .
And always when any one has time to call his own
She will come and be beside him as quiet as a stone.

LITTLE THINGS

There's nothing very beautiful and nothing very gay
About the rush of faces in the town by day;
But a light tan cow in a pale green mead,
That is very beautiful, beautiful indeed . . .
And the soft March wind and the low March mist
Are better than kisses in a dark street kissed . . .
The fragrance of the forest when it wakes at dawn,
The fragrance of a trim green village lawn,
The hearing of the murmur of the rain at play—
These things are beautiful, beautiful as day!
And I shan't stand waiting for love or scorn
When the feast is laid for a day new-born . . .
Oh, better let the little things I loved when little
Return when the heart finds the great things brittle;
And better is a temple made of bark and thong
Than a tall stone temple that may stand too long.

DILEMMA

What though the moon should come
  With a blinding glow,

And the stars have a game
  On the wood's edge. . . .
A man would have to still
  Cut and weed and sow,
And lay a white line
  When he plants a hedge.

What though God
  With a great sound of rain
Came to talk of violets
  And things people do. . . .
I would have to labor
  And dig with my brain
Still to get a truth
  Out of all words new.

WILD PLUM

They are unholy who are born
  To love wild plum at night,
Who once have passed it on a road
  Glimmering and white.

It is as though the darkness had
  Speech of silver words,
Or as though a cloud of stars
  Perched like ghostly birds.

They are unpitied from their birth
  And homeless in men's sight,
Who love, better than the earth,
  Wild plum at night.

MARIANNE MOORE

Marianne Moore was born in St. Louis, Missouri, November 15, 1887. She received her B.A. from Bryn Mawr College in 1909; taught stenography at the United States Indian school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, from 1911 to 1915; was an assistant in the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library, and editor of *The Dial* from 1925 to its demise in 1929.

Her verse was first published in *The Egoist* (London) in 1915 and, although her unusual lines attracted immediate attention, an inherent reticence kept her from submitting a collection to any publisher. It was not until 1921 that a few of her friends felt it incumbent upon themselves to "pirate" her work and so, without her coöperation, *Poems* was published in that year by *The Egoist Press*. Three years later (in December, 1924), she received the Dial Award of two thousand dollars for "distinguished service to American letters." Her *Observations* (1924), a volume including the earlier poems as well as the more recent ones, appeared at the same time.

Miss Moore's work is frankly puzzling, not only to the disinterested reader, but to the avowed student of modern poetry. Although her early verses present no difficulties, her more characteristic lines seem to erect a barrier of jagged clauses, barbed quotations and suspicious structures between herself and her audience. It has been asserted, and the editor shares this opinion, that Miss Moore's highly intellectualized dissertations are actually part of the domain of criticism rather than of poetry, and that her creations are in the latter division chiefly because of the physical pattern of her lines. Her studies are usually scornful and always sophisticated, varying between statements which seem to be seeking their prose origins and an intellectual dexterity: a sort of witty and ironic geometry. Her satires are in a new *genre* and her observations are both precise and fantastic—she sees zebras "supreme in their abnormality," elephants "with their fog-colored skins."

Whether or not Miss Moore's essays are actually poetry—a matter which cannot be determined until that indefinable term itself is defined—there can be no doubt about the incision of her ideas and the bite of her language. "To a Steam Roller" and "The Fish" are compact with surprises in which the fact and its surrounding figures are more of a critical unit than first appears. Hers is never, not even in her most eccentric designs, a loose structure of fortuitous phrases; the expression is as clenched and controlled as the thought.

A TALISMAN

Under a splintered mast,
torn from the ship and cast
near her hull,

a stumbling shepherd found,
embedded in the ground,
a sea-gull

of lapis lazuli,
a scarab of the sea,
with wings spread—

curling its coral feet,
parting its beak to greet
men long dead.

THAT HARP YOU PLAY SO WELL

O David, if I had
Your power, I should be glad—
In harping, with the sling,
In patient reasoning!

Blake, Homer, Job, and you,
Have made old wine-skins new.
Your energies have wrought
Stout continents of thought.

But, David, if the heart
Be brass, what boots the art
Of exorcising wrong,
Of harping to a song?

The scepter and the ring
And every royal thing
Will fail. Grief's lustiness
Must cure the harp's distress.

TO A STEAM ROLLER

The illustration
is nothing to you without the application.
You lack half wit. You crush all the particles down
into close conformity, and then walk back and forth on
them.

Sparkling chips of rock
are crushed down to the level of the parent block.
Were not "impersonal judgment in esthetic
matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you

might fairly achieve
it. As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive
of one's attending upon you; but to question
the congruence of the complement is vain, if it exists.

ENGLAND

with its baby rivers and little towns, each with its abbey or its cathedral;
with voices—one voice perhaps, echoing through the transept—the
criterion of suitability and convenience: and Italy with its equal
shores—contriving an epicureanism from which the grossness has been

extracted: and Greece with its goats and its gourds, the nest of modified illusions:
and France, the "chrysalis of the nocturnal butterfly" in
whose products, mystery of construction diverts one from what was originally one's
object—substance at the core: and the East with its snails, its emotional

shorthand and jade cockroaches, its rock crystal and its imperturbability,
all of museum quality: and America where there
is the little old ramshackle victoria in the south, where cigars are smoked on the
street in the north; where there are no proof readers, no silkworms, no digressions;

the wild man's land; grass-less, links-less, language-less country—in which letters are written
not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand,
but in plain American which cats and dogs can read! The letter "a" in psalm and calm when
pronounced with the sound of "a" in candle, is very noticeable but

why should continents of misapprehension have to be accounted for by the
fact? Does it follow that because there are poisonous toadstools
which resemble mushrooms, both are dangerous? In the case of mettlesomeness which may be
mistaken for appetite, of heat which may appear to be haste, no con-

clusions may be drawn. To have misapprehended the matter, is to have confessed
that one has not looked far enough. The sublimated wisdom
of China, Egyptian discernment, the cataclysmic torrent of emotion compressed
in the verbs of the Hebrew language, the books of the man who is able

to say, "I envy nobody but him and him only, who catches more fish than
I do,"—the flower and fruit of all that noted superi-
ority—should one not have stumbled upon it in America, must one imagine
that it is not there? It has never been confined to one locality.

THE FISH

Wade
through black jade
  Of the crow-blue mussel shells, one
    keeps
    adjusting the ash heaps;
  opening and shutting itself like

an
injured fan.
  The barnacles which encrust the
    side
    of the wave, cannot hide
  there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,
split like spun
glass, move themselves with spotlight swift-
ness
into the crevices—
in and out, illuminating

the
turquoise sea
of bodies. The water drives a
wedge
of iron through the iron edge
of the cliff, whereupon the stars,

pink
rice grains, ink
bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like
green
lilies and submarine
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All
external
marks of abuse are present on
this
defiant edifice—
all the physical features of

ac-
cident—lack
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns
and
hatchet strokes, these things stand
out on it; the chasm side is

dead.
Repeated
evidence has proved that it can
live
on what cannot revive
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

Robinson Jeffers' condensed autobiography runs as follows: "Born in Pittsburgh in 1887; my parents carried me about Europe a good deal. Of the first visit I remember three things—a pocketful of snails loosed on the walls of a kindergarten in Zürich, paintings of Keats and Shelley hanging side by side somewhere in London, and Arthur's Seat, the hill about Edinburgh. When I was fifteen I was brought home. Next year my family moved to California and I graduated at eighteen from Occidental College, Los Angeles. After that, desultory years at the University of Southern California, University of Zürich, Medical School in Los Angeles, University of Washington, but with faint interest. I wasn't deeply interested in anything but poetry. I married Una Call Kuster in 1913. We were going to England in the autumn of 1914. But the August news turned us to this village of Carmel instead; and when the stagecoach topped the hill from Monterey, and we looked down through pines and sea-fogs on Carmel Bay, it was evident that we had come without knowing it to our inevitable place."

Flagons and Apples (1912) was Jeffers' undistinguished first volume; it was followed by *Californians* (1916), a scarcely more original book. In 1925 *Tamar and Other Poems* was brought out by a small printer and caused an overnight sensation. It was reprinted the following year, with the addition of new work, as *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems* (1926). This, it was evident at once, was masculine poetry, stark, even terrible in its intensities. Whatever defects this verse has—and it must be confessed that Jeffers piles on his catastrophes with little humor and less restraint—there is no denying its elemental power. He combines two almost contrary types of strength: the impetuous American and the stoic Greek.

The Women at Point Sur (1927) shows how easily Jeffers can swing the long line, how suddenly his phrases soar from the tawdry into the terrible, how boldly he can lift a language which, in the hands of most poets, would be nothing more than wild rhetoric.

Cawdor (1928) again reveals Jeffers turning away from gentle themes to almost unbearable ones. The long poem is a continuation of the bewilderment announced in the preceding volumes. Jeffers himself says, "I think of *Cawdor* as making a third with *Tamar* and *The Women at Point Sur;* but as if in *Tamar* human affairs had been seen looking westward against the ocean; in *Point Sur* looking upward, minimized to ridicule against the stars; in *Cawdor* looking eastward, against the earth, reclaiming a little dignity from that association. . . . Where not only generations but races drizzle away so fast, one wonders the more urgently what it is for, and whether this beautiful earth is amused or sorry at the procession of her possessors." There are also a number of shorter poems, not actually subversive but, continues Jeffers, "the mere common sense of our predicament as passionate bits of earth and water." . . . The setting of *Cawdor* is monstrous, the symbols excessive, the speech of his characters unreal; yet the backgrounds are not much more tragic than Jeffers' own weird Carmel coast and his people move in an atmosphere larger if more forbidding than reality. As in his other work, exaggerations of lust and violence outdo each other; but these, which in a lesser man would be absurd, are compelling because of the sheer force behind them and the malefic universe they imply.

This force is not only inherent in Jeffers' extraordinary language, but in his demonic search for ultimates. He disdains the illusions by which man makes life endurable: love, nature, the mind—these are all self-destructive and useless. Quiet is empty denial and peace a forlorn hope. Death seems the one freedom, "the huge gift," but annihilation itself, he realizes, is impossible. There is left only despair—and this is the cry beneath Jeffers' strength. The longing for oblivion explains his wild dreams, blood-shot landscapes, inhuman crimes, incests, brutalities, nightmare-struggles where life "drinks her defeat and devours her famine for food."

Thus he celebrates "the charm of the dark," enlarges on passions turned inward and men "all matted in one mesh"; he sings a frustrated *Dies Irae* to unresponding Nothingness. Therefore the things he loves best are rocks, black cypresses, depths of ocean, granite mountains—things that have their being without ambition, without hope, without consciousness.

But negation alone cannot explain the poet's persuasion. An examination of his utterance discloses a strange phenomenon: Jeffers preaches the gospel of Nothingness in impassioned periods. He mourns, with inconsistent vigor, "the broken balance, the hopeless prostration of the earth under men's hands." His Jesus (in *Dear Judas*) is only an extension of the fanatically possessive Barclay (in *The Women at Point Sur*); even mystical passion becomes a high-pitched turbulence and love a last despair.

Thus Jeffers is in danger of emotional abandonment. His dramas are conditioned not by the exigencies of the situation nor by the demands of his characters, but by Jeffers' inverted violences. The chaos is self-generated; the didacticism no less didactic for being nullifying and uncontrolled; the imagination is too often disturbed by intellectual hysteria.

Dear Judas (1929) is composed of two long and a few short poems, the two longer ones bearing a relation to each other in the contrasted aspects of love, the shorter ones condensing Jeffers' philosophy into some of his finest moments. Like his other work, *Dear Judas* exhibits Jeffers projecting blind and bewildering Nature, misconceiving man as a "spectral episode." Here again is energy threshing in meaninglessness; here is force in need of a faith.

Thurso's Landing (1932) consists of one long poem and several highly characteristic shorter ones. The title-poem must rank among Jeffers' most important creations—a poem in which sheer power and eloquence triumph above black and unrelieved melodrama.

Superficially, because of his loose musical line, Jeffers seems to resemble Whitman, but his spirit is the very opposite of that rude yea-sayer. Where Whitman loses himself in all-embracing affirmations, Jeffers loses himself—and the world—in all-inclusive negations. The Californian poet turns against the sense of love which upheld Whitman and which he upheld; until man can "love outwardly," love of man, to Jeffers, is only "the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught—they say—God, when he walked on earth." It was, however, not so much Jeffers' negations to which the critics objected as to his abnormal themes. This was the more curious since, beneath his preoccupations with abnormality, the poet implied a definite morality. Jeffers explained this element of his work in a letter which leaves no doubt of his intentions: "In *Tamar* a little and in *The Women at Point Sur* consciously and definitely, incest is symbolized racial introversion: man regarding man exclusively—founding his values, desires, a picture of the universe, all on his own humanity. . . . The tendency to romanticize unmoral freedom leads to destruction—often of the individual but always of the social organism. One of the intentions of *Point Sur* was to indicate the destruction and strip everything but its natural ugliness from the unmorality." Love that "turns inward" is thus shown as the opposite of love; chaotic, evil, not only self- but all-destructive.

Yet if Jeffers feeds on destruction and terror he is not sickened but sustained by it. His poetry communicates with force if not with power that stony vigor. It never falters, but sweeps on, cumulative and irresistible. His epithets are always exact, his occasional metaphors as inevitable as "the leopard-footed evening," "she moved sighing, like a loose fire"; a hawk's wing "trails like a banner in defeat." He muses on "the lame feet of salvation," sees "Orion strung in the throat of the valley like a lamp-lighted bridge," hears "the stars blow long pipings of light." In his shorter poems, as well as in the longer and more elaborated work, Jeffers sounds a major music. He achieves a startling paradox: he sings death with such fervor that his bitter darkness shines more vividly than most surrounding sweetness and light.

COMPENSATION

Solitude that unmakes me one of men
In snow-white hands brings singular recompense,
Evening me with kindlier natures when
On the needled pinewood the cold dews condense
About the hour of Rigel fallen from heaven
In wintertime, or when the long night tides
Sigh blindly from the sand-dune backward driven,
Or when on stormwings of the northwind rides
The foamscud with the cormorants, or when passes
A horse or dog with brown affectionate eyes,
Or autumn frosts are pricked by earliest grasses,
Or whirring from her covert a quail flies.
Why, even in humanity, beauty and good
Show from the mountainside of solitude.

AGE IN PROSPECT

Praise youth's hot blood if you will, I think that happiness
Rather consists in having lived clear through
Youth and hot blood, on to the wintrier hemisphere
Where one has time to wait and to remember.

Youth and hot blood are beautiful, so is peacefulness.
Youth had some islands in it, but age is indeed
An island and a peak; age has infirmities,
Not few, but youth is all one fever.

To look around and to love in his appearances,
Though a little calmly, the universal God's
Beauty is better I think than to lip eagerly
The mother's breast or another woman's.

And there is no possession more sure than memory's;
But if I reach that gray island, that peak,
My hope is still to possess with eyes the homeliness
Of ancient loves, ocean and mountains,

And meditate the sea-mouth of mortality
And the fountain six feet down with a quieter thirst
Than now I feel for old age; a creature progressively
Thirsty for life will be for death too.

ANTE MORTEM

It is likely enough that lions and scorpions
Guard the end; life never was bonded to be endurable nor the act of dying
Unpainful; the brain burning too often
Earns, though it held itself detached from the object, often a burnt age.
No matter, I shall not shorten it by hand.
Incapable of body or unmoved of brain is no evil, one always went envying
The quietness of stones. But if the striped blossom
Insanity spread lewd splendors and lightning terrors at the end of the forest;
Or intolerable pain work its known miracle,
Exile the monarch soul, set a sick monkey in the office . . . remember me
Entire and balanced when I was younger,
And could lift stones, and comprehend in the praises the cruelties of life.

POST MORTEM

Happy people die whole, they are all dissolved in a moment, they have had what they wanted,
No hard gifts; the unhappy
Linger a space, but pain is a thing that is glad to be forgotten; but one who has given
His heart to a cause or a country,
His ghost may spaniel it a while, disconsolate to watch it. I was wondering how long the spirit
That sheds this verse will remain
When the nostrils are nipped, when the brain rots in its vault or bubbles in the violence of fire
To be ash in metal. I was thinking
Some stalks of the wood whose roots I married to the earth of this place will stand five centuries;
I held the roots in my hand,
The stems of the trees between two fingers; how many remote generations of women
Will drink joy from men's loins,

And dragged from between the thighs of what mothers will giggle at my ghost when it curses the axmen,
Gray impotent voice on the sea-wind,
When the last trunk falls? The women's abundance will have built roofs over all this foreland;
Will have buried the rock foundations
I laid here: the women's exuberance will canker and fail in its time and like clouds the houses
Unframe, the granite of the prime
Stand from the heaps: come storm and wash clean: the plaster is all run to the sea and the steel
All rusted; the foreland resumes
The form we loved when we saw it. Though one at the end of the age and far off from this place
Should meet my presence in a poem,
The ghost would not care but be here, long sunset shadow in the seams of the granite, and forgotten
The flesh, a spirit for the stone.

NOON

The pure air trembles, O pitiless God,
The air aches with flame on these gaunt rocks
Over the flat sea's face, the forest
Shakes in gales of piercing light.

But the altars are behind and higher
Where the great hills raise naked heads,
Pale antagonists in the reverberance
Of the pure air and the pitiless God.

On the domed skull of every hill
Who stand blazing with spread vans,
The arms uplifted, the eyes in ecstasy?

What wine has the God drunk, to sing
Violently in heaven, what wine his worshipers
Whose silence blazes? The light that is over
Light, the terror of noon, the eyes
That the eagles die at, have thrown down
Me and my pride, here I lie naked
In a hollow of the shadowless rocks,
Full of the God, having drunk fire.

CLOUDS OF EVENING

Enormous cloud-mountains that form over Point Lobos and into the sunset,
Figures of fire on the walls of tonight's storm,
Foam of gold in gorges of fire, and the great file of warrior angels:
Dreams gathering in the curdled brain of the earth—
The sky the brain-vault—on the threshold of sleep: poor earth, you, like your children
By inordinate desires tortured, make dreams?
Storms more enormous, wars nobler, more toppling mountains, more jeweled waters, more free
Fires on impossible headlands . . . as a poor girl
Wishing her lover taller and more desirous, and herself maned with gold,
Dreams the world right, in the cold bed, about dawn.
Dreams are beautiful; the slaves of form are beautiful also; I have grown to believe
A stone is a better pillow than many visions.

TO THE STONE-CUTTERS

Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Eat cynical earnings, knowing rock splits, records fall down,
The square-limbed Roman letters
Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain. The poet as well
Builds his monument mockingly;
For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave sun
Die blind, his heart blackening:
Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained thoughts found
The honey peace in old poems.

GALE IN APRIL

Intense and terrible beauty, how has our race with the frail naked nerves,
So little a craft swum down from its far launching?
Why now, only because the northwest blows and the headed grass billows,

Great seas jagging the west and on the granite
Blanching, the vessel is brimmed, this dancing play of the world is too much passion.
A gale in April so overfilling the spirit,
Though his ribs were thick as the earth's, arches of mountain, how shall one dare to live,
Though his blood were like the earth's rivers and his flesh iron,
How shall one dare to live? One is born strong, how do the weak endure it?
The strong lean upon death as on a rock,
After eighty years there is shelter and the naked nerves shall be covered with deep quietness.
O beauty of things go on, go on, O torture
Of intense joy, I have lasted out my time, I have thanked God and finished,
Roots of millennial trees fold me in the darkness,
Northwest wind shake their tops, not to the root, not to the root, I have passed
From beauty to the other beauty, peace, the night splendor.

CREDO

My friend from Asia has powers and magic, he plucks a blue leaf from the young blue-gum
And gazing upon it, gathering and quieting
The God in his mind, creates an ocean more real than the ocean, the salt, the actual
Appalling presence, the power of the waters.
He believes that nothing is real except as we make it.
I humbler have found in my blood
Bred west of Caucasus a harder mysticism.
Multitude stands in my mind but I think that the ocean in the bone vault is only
The bone vault's ocean: out there is the ocean's;
The water is the water, the cliff is the rock, come shocks and flashes of reality. The mind
Passes, the eye closes, the spirit is a passage;
The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself; the heart-breaking beauty
Will remain when there is no heart to break for it.

PROMISE OF PEACE

The heads of strong old age are beautiful
Beyond all grace of youth. They have strange quiet,
Integrity, health, soundness, to the full
They've dealt with life and been attempered by it.
A young man must not sleep; his years are war
Civil and foreign but the former's worse;
But the old can breathe in safety now that they are
Forgetting what youth meant, the being perverse,
Running the fool's gauntlet and being cut
By the whips of the five senses. As for me,
If I should wish to live long it were but
To trade those fevers for tranquillity,
Thinking though that's entire and sweet in the grave
How shall the dead taste the deep treasure they have?

APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS[1]

I

In the purple light, heavy with redwood, the slopes drop seaward,
Headlong convexities of forest, drawn in together to the steep ravine. Below, on the sea-cliff,
A lonely clearing; a little field of corn by the streamside; a roof under spared trees. Then the ocean
Like a great stone some one has cut to a sharp edge and polished to shining. Beyond it, the fountain
And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk sun. In the little clearing a woman
Was punishing a horse; she had tied the halter to a sapling at the edge of the wood; but when the great whip
Clung to the flanks the creature kicked so hard she feared he would snap the halter; she called from the house
The young man her son; who fetched a chain tie-rope, they working together
Noosed the small rusty links round the horse's tongue
And tied him by the swollen tongue to the tree.

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[1] A poem which explains Jeffers' attitude to his poetry better than any essay.

Seen from this height they are shrunk to insect size,
Out of all human relation. You cannot distinguish
The blood dripping from where the chain is fastened,
The beast shuddering; but the thrust neck and the legs
Far apart. You can see the whip fall on the flanks. . . .
The gesture of the arm. You cannot see the face of the woman.
The enormous light beats up out of the west across the cloud-
bars of the trade-wind. The ocean
Darkens, the high clouds brighten, the hills darken together.
Unbridled and unbelievable beauty
Covers the evening world . . . not covers, grows apparent out
of it, as Venus down there grows out
From the lit sky. What said the prophet? "I create good: and I
create evil: I am the Lord."

II

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
(The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering; but here the granite
cliff the gaunt cypresses' crown
Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what
Titan? The hills like pointed flames
Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under
the sun, what immolation?)
This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places:
and like the passionate spirit of humanity
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths,
the horrible transfigurements: I said in my heart,
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place." And I said,
"Burn sacrifices once a year to magic
Horror away from the house, this little house here
You have built over the ocean with your own hands
Beside the standing bowlders: for what are we,
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more liable
Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanities of de-
sire; not accidents, but essential,
And crowd up from the core." I imagined victims for those
wolves, I made the phantoms to follow.

They have hunted the phantoms and missed the house. It is not
good to forget over what gulls the spirit
Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower blown
seaward by the night-wind, floats to its quietness.

III

Bowlders blunted like an old bear's teeth break up from the
headland; below them
All the soil is thick with shells, the tide-rock feasts of a dead
people.
Here the granite flanks are scarred with ancient fire, the ghosts
of the tribe
Crouch in the nights beside the ghost of a fire, they try to
remember the sunlight,
Light has died out of their skies. These have paid something
for the future
Luck of the country, while we living keep old griefs in memory: though God's
Envy is not a likely fountain of ruin, to forget evil calls down
Sudden reminders from the cloud: remembered deaths be our
redeemers;
Imagined victims our salvation: white as the half moon at
midnight
Some one flamelike passed me, saying, "I am Tamar Cauldwell,
I have my desire,"
Then the voice of the sea returned, when she had gone by, the
stars to their towers.
. . . Beautiful country, burn again, Point Pinos down to the
Sur Rivers
Burn as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and the
Carmel water.

IV

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who invents victims, is only the ape of that God.
He washes it out with tears and many waters, calcines it with
fire in the red crucible,
Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the spirit flies out and
stands naked, he sees the spirit.

He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his hand, the atom is broken, the power that massed it
Cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have come home to myself, behold me.
I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me
In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth,
Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments,
And here am I moving the stars that are me."
I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason
For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.
He being sufficient might be still. I think they admit no reason; they are the ways of my love.
Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft: no thought apparent but burns darkly
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault: no thought outside: a certain measure in phenomena:
The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland, the ever-returning roses of dawn.

ELINOR WYLIE

Elinor (Hoyt) Wylie was born in 1887, in Somerville, New Jersey, but she was, she often protested, completely a Pennsylvanian by inheritance. On both sides she traced her ancestry back through old American families. A grandfather was Governor of Pennsylvania, her father was solictor-general in Roosevelt's administration. Her girlhood was passed in Washington, D. C. After girlhood, she traveled and lived abroad, thought of being a painter, and published her first tentative collection of verse. This tiny blue-gray volume of forty-three pages was issued anonymously ten years before her public début and has been for a long time out of print. In 1921 *Nets to Catch the Wind* appeared and Mrs. Wylie's name was suddenly spread throughout the country. She was married to William Rose Benét in 1924.

Nets to Catch the Wind is one of the most brilliant "first" volumes published in the last twenty years. The brilliance is one which, at first, seems to sparkle without burning. In several of the poems the author achieves a frigid ecstasy; emotion is not absent from her lines, but too frequently it seems a passion frozen at its source. It is the brilliance of moonlight coruscating on a plain of ice. But if Mrs. Wylie seldom allows her verses to become heated, she never permits them to remain dull. As a technician, she is always admirable; in "August" the sense of heat is conveyed by tropic luxuriance and contrast, in "The Eagle and the Mole" she lifts didacticism to a proud level. Her auditory effects are scarcely less remarkable; never has snow-silence been more unerringly communicated than in "Velvet Shoes."

Black Armour (1923) exhibits Mrs. Wylie's keenness against a mellower background. The beauty evoked in this volume no longer has "the hard heart of a child." As the intellect has grown more fiery, the mood has grown warmer while the craftsmanship is more dazzling than ever. This devotee of severe elegance has perfected an accent which is clipped and patrician; she varies the perfect modulation with rhymes that are delightfully acrid and departures which never fail of unique success. Mrs. Wylie, it is evident from the very titles of her volumes, had read the metaphysicians; Donne, Webster and (to make a great leap) Eliot found a voice in her lines. She felt

"behind a carnal mesh,
The clean bones crying in the flesh."

Possibly the most obvious and arresting feature of her work is the variety of her gifts. She reached from the nimble dexterity of a rondo like "Peregrine" to the introspective poignance of "Self Portrait," from the fanciful "Escape" to the grave mockery of "Let No Charitable Hope." But a greater unfoldment was to come.

Trivial Breath (1928) is the work of a poet in transition. At times the craftsman is uppermost; at times the creative genius. A preoccupation with her material obscures the half-uttered wisdom. Many of the verses, steeped in literature, pay homage to the letter; a smaller number, less absorbed in shaping an immaculate phrase, do reverence to the spirit. Mrs. Wylie recognized the danger of her own exquisiteness, of a style where elegance was too often a richly embroidered cloak draped upon a neat triviality. In "Minotaur" she admonished herself:

Go study to disdain
The frail, the overfine
That tapers to a line
Knotted about the brain.

Her distrust of the "overfine" deepened; in the summer of 1928 she wrote, with breathless certainty, those verses which compose her posthumous and finest volume. The day before her sudden death, she selected and arranged that last book with extraordinary prescience. She died December 16, 1928.

Angels and Earthly Creatures (1928) is the sublimation of all her gifts. Here are the cunningly poised and polished syllables, here are the old concerns with freezing silvers, frail china and pearly monotones, but here is a quality which lifts them high above themselves. Still indebted to the Jacobean metaphysicians, the poet transcends her influences and develops a highly personal mysticism. To say that her emotion is governed and disciplined is not to say that *Angels and Earthly Creatures* suffers from a lack of emotion. On the contrary, the sequence of nineteen sonnets has the spontaneity of a passionate improvisation, of something close to abandonment. The other poems share this intensity. "This Corruptible" is both visionary and philosophic; "O Virtuous Light" deals with that piercing clarity, the intuition which disturbs the senses, threatens reason and, "begotten of itself," unreconciled to ordinary experience, is "not a light by which to live." The other poems are scarcely less uplifted, finding their summit in "Hymn to Earth," which is possibly the deepest of her poems and one which is certain to endure. It was, as it happened, a clear premonition; it remains a noble valedictory. "The Pebble" (not to be found in any of her books) is spiritual autobiography that is immediate and universal. She could go no further. She had perfected her technique; without discarding her idiom, her spirit reached toward a final expression. She had suddenly attained the emotional stature of a great poet.

Though more mannered than her verse, her prose was scarcely less accomplished. *Jennifer Lorn* (1923), subtitled "A Sedate Extravaganza," *The Venetian Glass Nephew* (1925), *The Orphan Angel* (1926), *Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard* (1928) adroitly juggle a harlequin style. Differing widely from each other in plots, ranging from macabre artifice to an apocryphal legend of Shelley in America, the manipulation is always deft and the iridescent language could only spring from an unusually "jeweled" brain.

But it is as a poet that Elinor Wylie will live longest. The intellectual ardor is finally reënforced by spiritual strength, insuring duration to work which "preserves a shape utterly its own."

THE EAGLE AND THE MOLE

Avoid the reeking herd,
Shun the polluted flock,
Live like that stoic bird,
The eagle of the rock.

The huddled warmth of crowds
Begets and fosters hate;
He keeps, above the clouds,
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,
And herds to shelter run,
He sails above the storm,
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track
Your sinews cannot leap,
Avoid the lathered pack,
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul
From spotted sight or sound,
Live like the velvet mole;
Go burrow underground.

And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stones,
With rivers at their source,
And disembodied bones.

MADMAN'S SONG

Better to see your cheek grown hollow,
Better to see your temple worn,
Than to forget to follow, follow,
After the sound of a silver horn.

Better to bind your brow with willow
And follow, follow until you die,
Than to sleep with your head on a golden pillow,
Nor lift it up when the hunt goes by.

Better to see your cheek grown sallow
And your hair grown gray, so soon, so soon,
Than to forget to hallo, hallo,
After the milk-white hounds of the moon.

SANCTUARY

This is the bricklayer; hear the thud
Of his heavy load dumped down on stone.
His lustrous bricks are brighter than blood,
His smoking mortar whiter than bone.

Set each sharp-edged, fire-bitten brick
Straight by the plumb-line's shivering length;
Make my marvelous wall so thick
Dead nor living may shake its strength.

Full as a crystal cup with drink
Is my cell with dreams, and quiet, and cool. . . .
Stop, old man! You must leave a chink;
How can I breathe? *You can't, you fool!*

VELVET SHOES

Let us walk in the white snow
  In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
  At a tranquil pace,
  Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
  And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
  More beautiful
  Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
  In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
  Upon silver fleece,
  Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
  Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
  On white silence below.
  We shall walk in the snow.

ESCAPE

When foxes eat the last gold grape,
And the last white antelope is killed,
I shall stop fighting and escape
Into a little house I'll build.

But first I'll shrink to fairy size,
With a whisper no one understands,
Making blind moons of all your eyes,
And muddy roads of all your hands.

And you may grope for me in vain
In hollows under the mangrove root,
Or where, in apple-scented rain,
The silver wasp-nests hang like fruit.

GOLDEN BOUGH

These lovely groves of fountain-trees that shake
  A burning spray against autumnal cool,
Descend again in molten drops to make
  The rutted path a river and a pool.

They rise in silence, fall in quietude,
  Lie still as looking-glass to every sense;
Only their lion-color in the wood
  Roars to miraculous heat and turbulence.

AUGUST

Why should this Negro insolently stride
Down the red noonday on such noiseless feet?
Piled in his barrow, tawnier than wheat,
Lie heaps of smoldering daisies, somber-eyed,
Their copper petals shriveled up with pride,
Hot with a superfluity of heat,
Like a great brazier borne along the street
By captive leopards, black and burning pied.

Are there no water-lilies, smooth as cream,
With long stems dripping crystal? Are there none
Like those white lilies, luminous and cool,
Plucked from some hemlock-darkened northern stream
By fair-haired swimmers, diving where the sun
Scarce warms the surface of the deepest pool?

SONNET

Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones
There's something in this richness that I hate.
I love the look, austere, immaculate,
Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones.
There's something in my very blood that owns
Bare hills, cold silver on a sky of slate,
A thread of water, churned to milky spate
Streaming through slanted pastures fenced with stones.

I love those skies, thin blue or snowy gray,
Those fields sparse-planted, rendering meager sheaves;
That spring, briefer than apple-blossom's breath,
Summer, so much too beautiful to stay,
Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,
And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

My body is weary to death of my mischievous brain;
I am weary forever and ever of being brave;
Therefore I crouch on my knees while the cool white rain
Curves the clover over my head like a wave.

The stem and the frosty seed of the grass are ripe;
I have devoured their strength; I have drunk them deep;
And the dandelion is gall in a thin green pipe,
But the clover is honey and sun and the smell of sleep.

LET NO CHARITABLE HOPE

Now let no charitable hope
Confuse my mind with images
Of eagle and of antelope;
I am in nature none of these.

I was, being human, born alone;
I am, being woman, hard beset;
I live by squeezing from a stone
The little nourishment I get.

In masks outrageous and austere
The years go by in single file;
But none has merited my fear,
And none has quite escaped my smile.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

I lack the braver mind
That dares to find
The lover friend, and kind.

I fear him to the bone;
I lie alone
By the beloved one,

And, breathless for suspense,
Erect defense
Against love's violence

Whose silences portend
A bloody end
For lover never friend.

But, in default of faith,
In futile breath,
I dream no ill of Death.

"DESOLATION IS A DELICATE THING"

Sorrow lay upon my breast more heavily than winter clay
Lying ponderable upon the unmoving bosom of the dead;
Yet it was dissolved like a thin snowfall; it was softly withered away;
Presently like a single drop of dew it had trembled and fled.

This sorrow, which seemed heavier than a shovelful of loam,
Was gone like water, like a web of delicate frost;
It was silent and vanishing like smoke; it was scattered like foam;
Though my mind should desire to preserve it, nevertheless it is lost.

This sorrow was not like sorrow; it was shining and brief;
Even as I waked and was aware of its going, it was past and gone;
It was not earth; it was no more than a light leaf,
Or a snowflake in spring, which perishes upon stone.

This sorrow was small and vulnerable and short-lived;
It was neither earth nor stone; it was silver snow
Fallen from heaven, perhaps; it has not survived
An hour of the sun; it is sad it should be so.

This sorrow, which I believed a gravestone over my heart,
Is gone like a cloud; it eluded me as I woke;
Its crystal dust is suddenly broken and blown apart;
It was not my heart; it was this poor sorrow alone which broke.

PETER AND JOHN

Twelve good friends
Walked under the leaves
Binding the ends
Of the barley sheaves.

Peter and John
Lay down to sleep
Pillowed upon
A haymaker's heap.

John and Peter
Lay down to dream.
The air was sweeter
Than honey and cream.

Peter was bred
In the salty cold.
His hair was red
And his eyes were gold.

John had a mouth
Like a wing bent down.
His brow was smooth
And his eyes were brown.

Peter to slumber
Sank like a stone,
Of all their number
The bravest one.

John more slowly
Composed himself,
Young and holy
Among the Twelve.

John as he slept
Cried out in grief,
Turned and wept
On the golden leaf:

"Peter, Peter,
Stretch me your hand
Across the glitter
Of the harvest land!

"Peter, Peter,
Give me a sign!
This was a bitter
Dream of mine,—

"Bitter as aloes
It parched my tongue.
Upon the gallows
My life was hung.

"Sharp it seemed
As a bloody sword.
Peter, I dreamed
I was Christ the Lord!"

Peter turned
To holy Saint John:
His body burned
In the falling sun.

In the falling sun
He burned like flame:
"John, Saint John,
I have dreamed the same!

"My bones were hung
On an elder tree;
Bells were rung
Over Galilee.

"A silver penny
Sealed each of my eyes.
Many and many
A cock crew thrice."

When Peter's word
Was spoken and done,
"Were you Christ the Lord
In your dream?" said John.

"No," said the other,
"That I was not.
I was our brother
Iscariot."

BIRTHDAY SONNET

Take home Thy prodigal child, O Lord of Hosts!
Protect the sacred from the secular danger;
Advise her, that Thou never needst avenge her;
Marry her mind neither to man's nor ghost's
Nor holier domination's, if the costs
Of such commingling should transport or change her;
Defend her from familiar and stranger,
And earth's and air's contagions and rusts.

Instruct her strictly to preserve Thy gift
And alter not its grain in atom sort;
Angels may wed her to their ultimate hurt
And men embrace a specter in a shift
So that no drop of the pure spirit fall
Into the dust; defend Thy prodigal.

O VIRTUOUS LIGHT

A private madness has prevailed
Over the pure and valiant mind;
The instrument of reason failed
And the star-gazing eyes struck blind.

Sudden excess of light has wrought
Confusion in the secret place
Where the slow miracles of thought
Take shape through patience into grace.

Mysterious as steel and flint
The birth of this destructive spark
Whose inward growth has power to print
Strange suns upon the natural dark.

O break the walls of sense in half
And make the spirit fugitive!
This light begotten of itself
Is not a light by which to live!

The fire of farthing tallow dips
Dispels the menace of the skies
So it illuminate the lips
And enter the discerning eyes.

O virtuous light, if thou be man's
Or matter of the meteor stone,
Prevail against this radiance
Which is engendered of its own!

THE PEBBLE

If any have a stone to shy,
Let him be David and not I;
The lovely shepherd, brave and vain,
Who has a maggot in the brain,
Which, since the brain is bold and pliant,
Takes the proportions of a giant.
Alas, my legendary fate!
Who sometimes rage, but never hate.

Long, long before the pebble flieth
I see a virtue in Goliath;
Yea, in the Philistine his face,
A touching majesty and grace;
Then like the lights of evening shine
The features of the Philistine
Until my spirit faints to see
The beauty of my enemy.
If any have a stone to fling
Let him be a shepherd-king,
Who is himself so beautiful
He may detest the gross and dull
With holy rage and heavenly pride
To make a pebble sanctified
And feather its course with wings of scorn.
But, from the day that I was born
Until like corn I bow to the sickle,
I am in hatred false and fickle.
I am most cruel to any one
Who hates me with devotion;
I will not freeze, I will not burn;
I make his heart a poor return
For all the passion that he spends
In swearing we shall never be friends;
For all the pains his passion spent
In hatred I am impotent;
The sad perversity of my mind
Sees in him my kin and kind.
Alas, my shameful heritage,
False in hate and fickle in rage!
Alas, to lack the power to loathe!
I like them each; I love them both;
Philistine and shepherd-king
They strike the pebble from my sling;
My heart grows cold, my spirit grows faint;
Behold, a hero and a saint
Where appeared, a moment since,
A giant and a heathen prince;
And I am bound and given over
To be no better than a lover,

Alas, who strove as a holy rebel!
They have broke my sling and stole my pebble:
If any have a stone to throw
It is not I, ever or now.

HYMN TO EARTH

Farewell, incomparable element,
Whence man arose, where he shall not return;
And hail, imperfect urn
Of his last ashes, and his firstborn fruit;
Farewell, the long pursuit,
And all the adventures of his discontent;
The voyages which sent
His heart averse from home:
Metal of clay, permit him that he come
To thy slow-burning fire as to a hearth;
Accept him as a particle of earth.

Fire, being divided from the other three,
It lives removed, or secret at the core;
Most subtle of the four,
When air flies not, nor water flows,
It disembodied goes,
Being light, elixir of the first decree,
More volatile than he;
With strength and power to pass
Through space, where never his least atom was:
He has no part in it, save as his eyes
Have drawn its emanation from the skies.

A wingless creature heavier than air,
He is rejected of its quintessence;
Coming and going hence,
In the twin minutes of his birth and death,
He may inhale as breath,
As breath relinquish heaven's atmosphere,
Yet in it have no share,
Nor can survive therein
Where its outer edge is filtered pure and thin:
It doth but lend its crystal to his lungs
For his early crying, and his final songs.

The element of water has denied
Its child; it is no more his element;
It never will relent;
Its silver harvests are more sparsely given
Than the rewards of heaven,
And he shall drink cold comfort at its side:
The water is too wide:
The sewmew and the gull
Feather a nest made soft and pitiful
Upon its foam; he has not any part
In the long swell of sorrow at its heart.

Hail and farewell, beloved element,
Whence he departed, and his parent once;
See where thy spirit runs
Which for so long hath had the moon to wife;
Shall this support his life
Until the arches of the waves be bent
And grow shallow and spent?
Wisely it cast him forth
With his dead weight of burdens nothing worth,
Leaving him, for the universal years,
A little seawater to make his tears.

Hail, element of earth, receive thy own,
And cherish, at thy charitable breast,
This man, this mongrel beast:
He plows the sand, and, at his hardest need,
He sows himself for seed;
He plows the furrow, and in this lies down
Before the corn is grown;
Between the apple bloom
And the ripe apple is sufficient room
In time, and matter, to consume his love
And make him parcel of a cypress grove.

Receive him as thy lover for an hour
Who will not weary, by a longer stay,
The kind embrace of clay;
Even within thine arms he is dispersed
To nothing, as at first;

The air flings downward from its four-quartered tower
Him whom the flames devour;
At the full tide, at the flood,
The sea is mingled with his salty blood:
The traveler dust, although the dust be vile,
Sleeps as thy lover for a little while.

FRANK ERNEST HILL

Frank Ernest Hill was born in San Jose, California, October 29, 1888. He graduated from Stanford University, taught at the University of Illinois, Stanford University and Columbia Extension. During the War, he went into the Air Service, and after a brief experience with the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation, engaged in journalism and publishing. In collaboration with Joseph Auslander, he wrote *The Wingèd Horse* (1927), which is a story rather than a criticism of poetry, and edited *The Wingèd Horse Anthology* (1929).

Stone Dust (1928) is a volume which presents the clash between the mechanical and creative forces in modern civilization. Neither scorning nor sentimentalizing the machine, Hill appraises it in terms of inner as well as outer experience. "Upper Air," "Wing Harbor," and the three other aeroplane poems are verses—possibly the first—by one who has known flying intimately; they transcend physical sensation, registering effects on spirit. The two longer poems, of which "Earth and Air" is the better, pierce through the material with clear vision. It is interesting to compare "Earth and Air"—particularly its point of view—with the preceding apostrophe: Elinor Wylie's "Hymn to Earth."

EARTH AND AIR

I

Earth is the tower of granite, the floor of loam,
The grass that seeds, the sheep that fatten for men,
Shapes that are beaten in fire or built in wall,
The plow preparing the soil to be born again;
The crystal well, the gold of the honeycomb,
The hands that pattern with wool or hide or clay;
Earth is the wain, the sickle, the sledge, the stall—
　　Earth is our yesterday.

II

Air is the thrust of steam and burning gas,
The spark men take from the foam of a falling stream,
The word of the first sea caught on the last of the seven,
Ships with the speed of a dream made more than dream;
The throb of steel in a cage of steel and glass,
Iron fingers at smooth and gleaming play,
Air is the wings of men on the sea of heaven—
Air is today.

III

Earth is the suck of men, their loaf and their healing;
With earth they are poor but sapful, driven but strong;
Air is a high, thin world where their eyes grow weaker,
Their round breasts flatten, their cheeks fall white and long.
Air is a shifting floor and a viewless ceiling,
Genii building and wrecking and building again,
It is a half-heard magic speech from a hidden speaker
Sounding through light and rain.

IV

Men with the vision of air went planning and building;
They dreamed of slaves of iron and wrought their slaves;
They envied the wind and the eagle and spread their wings
Above the shadow of sinking woods and waves.
Men made little suns for the midnight's gilding,
Bridged with their wires the bridgeless gap of seas;
They dulled the teeth of winter, they turned the stings
And withering of disease—

V

Men with the dream of air have climbed to their vision,
But now they are faint for the meat of a day gone by;
The steeds of the sun race on in a golden madness,
The hurtling drivers are pale in the height of the sky.
Some say: "Hard Fate in a wrath and a great derision
Has laid the tools of gods in the hands of men;
Can dust breed stars? Can tears be distilled to gladness?
Let us go to earth again!"

VI

But the many hear not, the millions follow their dreaming
Driving their iron cattle on stone or steel,
Flying their iron hawks on an airy ocean,
Bearing children that play with the spark and the wheel.
They will never turn from swiftness and silver gleaming
Or the sense that he who has taken in wheel or rod
The staff of gods and the magic of god-like motion
Himself shall become a god.

VII

Perhaps they will come again to the sun and the bough,
The wind and the clod that once were their strife and their fare;
They will take not of olden beauty or olden toil;
They will only come back to earth when earth is air:
When they girdle peaks with their pavements and send their plow
Like a whirl of wind, and store their snow and their sun,
And sow where the strength they have sifted into the soil
Yields five instead of one.

VIII

Look back, then, you who had love for earth and regret her,
And mourn a change that harries your hill and sky;
For men are turned from the peace of the scythe and candle;
Their eyes are fierce for the bright and the swift and the high.
They have wrecked a world for the leaping dream of a better,
And gone from peace toward a peace beyond a war,
They have mounted untrodden stairs to a key and a handle
That open a door.

UPPER AIR

High, pale, imperial places of slow cloud
And windless wells of sunlit silence. . . . Sense
Of some aware, half-scornful Permanence
Past which we flow like water that is loud

A moment on the granite. Nothing here
Beats with the pulse that beat in us below;
That was a flame; this is the soul of snow
Immortalized in moveless atmosphere.

Yet we shall brood upon this haunt of wings
When love, like perfume washed away in rain,
Dies on the years. Still we shall come again,
Seeking the clouds as we have sought the sea,
Asking the peace of these immortal things
That will not mix with our mortality.

T. S. ELIOT

T. S. (Thomas Stearns) Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1888. He received his A.B. at Harvard in 1909 and his A.M. in 1910. Subsequently, he studied at the Sorbonne and at Merton College, Oxford, becoming a teacher and lecturer in London, where he has lived (although he no longer teaches) since 1914. He was, for a while, assistant editor of *The Egoist* and is at present the leading spirit of *The Criterion,* a magazine which he helped to found.

Prufrock appeared in England in 1917. An American edition, including a number of other verses, was published under the title *Poems* in 1920. It was hailed, reviled, applauded, misunderstood and imitated. There were indeed many imitators, particularly in England, where the younger men, rebounding from Georgian affectations, seized upon Eliot's disillusioned subtleties as a new gospel. Most of them patterned their lines upon the now famous "Sweeney" model, and by 1922 Eliot was one of the most discussed and disputed of living American poets. This volume, *Poems,* contains two sharply differentiated though related idioms. The more arresting and, therefore, the more copied evocations are the impressionistic sets of quatrains that compose "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," "Sweeney Erect," "The Hippopotamus" (that stinging whimsicality), "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service." It is a witty if recondite inflection which is heard beneath the muffled allusions; the edged lines crackle with observations as shrewd as "the snarled and yelping seas," "this oval O cropped out with teeth," "laughter tinkling among the teacups," "the damp souls of housemaids." Occasionally his wit takes on a darker intensity, as when, speaking of Donne's struggle to transcend the senses, he writes:

He knew the anguish of the marrow,
The ague of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

Broadly summarized, however, about half of the sixty-three pages of Eliot's *Poems* attains a level little higher than that of acrid epigrams, mordant and complicated *vers de société.* But there is another phase of Eliot, one that is disclosed in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Portrait of a Lady," and "La Figlia Che Piange," in which picture, philosophy and music are surprisingly blended. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," written while Eliot was still at Harvard, is a minor masterpiece; nothing in recent poetry (if we forget Laforgue and the other French poets to whom Eliot is manifestly indebted), nothing in English at least, has communicated so great a sense of ambiguous hurt and general frustration. More condensed and equally precise in its hyperesthetic delicacy is "The Portrait of a Lady," that analytical study of the feminine dilettante, the faded votary of dimly lit studios—a baffled *précieuse* diffusing small talk and boredom. In these poems as well as the succeeding one, Eliot becomes the laureate of nostalgia, of a dwindling and futile *Wehmut.*

The Waste Land (1922) is Eliot's attempt to sound this theme of disillusion-frustration on a large scale by combining or rather colliding his two styles. The publication of this forty-page poem caused an outburst so violent and prolonged that the echoes of the controversy hung in the air for several years. On the one hand it was dismissed as "an impudent hoax," "filthy bedlam raving"; on the other it was exalted as "the greatest document of our day, showing the starvation of our entire civilization." Both estimates are, of course, absurd; *The Waste Land* is neither "erudite gibberish" nor is it "a great work, with one triumph after another." It is, in essence, a set of mangled, difficult and (in spite of the arbitrary program of unification) separate failures and successes. If its pages are splintered with broken phrases and distorted pictures, one must remember that Eliot is attempting to portray disintegration itself. Its dependence on associations in other literatures makes it seem like an anthology of assimilations; its jumble of quotations (without inverted commas) from thirty-one sources gives the entire structure the look of a piece of literary carpentry done by a scholarly joiner. But certain passages are quick with poignance; several episodes are unforgettably etched. Clive Bell wrote, "The despairing tone which pervades Eliot's poetry is not, it seems to me, so much the despair of disillusionment as the morbidity of *The Yellow Book.*" But, having quoted Bell, in derogation I should let him add, "But how the man can write! And the experience, if it be small, is perfectly digested and assimilated; it has gone into the blood and bones of his work. By his choice of words, by his forging of phrases, by his twisting, stretching and snapping of rhythms, Eliot can make out of his narrow vision things of perpetual beauty."

The "things of perpetual beauty" are few and far to seek in *The Waste Land*, but they are there. And, if the rare felicities are difficult to find, we must remember that much which was once considered ugly and unintelligible—one recalls Beethoven's symphonies, Whistler's canvases, Rodin's bronzes, Browning's monologues, Whitman's "barbaric yawp"—much which our grandparents considered heretical and outrageous has become part of the world's cultural tradition. To dislike Eliot's work because it is obscure is to admit an honest prejudice; to say that Eliot is a charlatan is to repeat the charge that Wagner wrote "Tristan and Isolde" merely to irritate the critics.

Eliot is quick to admit his influences. Reviewing Peter Quennell's *Baudelaire and the Symbolists* in 1930 he refers to Arthur Symons' *Symbolist Movement in Literature*, saying, "I myself owe Mr. Symons a great debt. But for having read his book I should not, in the year 1908, have heard of Laforgue and Rimbaud; I should probably not have begun to read Verlaine; and but for reading Verlaine, I should not have heard of Corbière. So the Symons book is one of those which have affected the course of my life." But, as Edmund Wilson points out, though Eliot's main theme (the inferiority of the present to the past) is found in Laforgue and the other Romantics, though the idea of juxtaposing many literatures and a medley of idioms was suggested by Pound, "yet Eliot manages to be most effective precisely where he might be expected to be least original—he succeeds in conveying his meanings, in communicating his emotions, in spite of all his learning or mysterious allusions, and whether we understand them or not. . . . He has been able to lend even to the rhythms, to the words themselves, of his great predecessors a new music and a new meaning."

Since *The Waste Land* Eliot's occasional poems appeared in separate pamphlets, each poem emphasizing the author's depth of observation and horror of a world which has nothing stronger to lean on than hollow despair. Finding fault with Eliot's attitude, Henry Newbolt (in *New Paths on Helicon*) wrote, "It is a lamentable thing to hear so despairing a voice in the hour of our anxiety. . . . But it is still more lamentable that the assurance of our hopelessness should be conveyed to us in so trivial a manner. These contrasts should be crushing, but they are too clever for that; these ironies should be tragic, but they are hardly more than jeers." What Newbolt failed to see was Eliot's intention, which was not to console but rather to condemn. Newbolt was likewise in error in assuming (1) that all Eliot's ironies were conveyed in a trivial manner and (2) that when they were so conveyed, they were not less but more tragic because of their seeming flippancy of utterance. This essential seriousness was fortified by the publication of *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1929), the general point of view being that of a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion." The volume as a whole is a complete disproof of the charge of cynical unconcern; here is no jeering detachment. Eliot insists not only on the necessity of ideas but on the need of ideals, saying explicitly, in an essay pointing out the deficiencies of the Humanism of Irving Babbitt, "If you mean a spiritual and intellectual coördination on a high level, then it is doubtful whether civilization can endure without religion, and religion without a church."

Besides his poetry, Eliot has published four books of essays: *The Sacred Wood* (1921), *Homage to John Dryden* (1924), *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1929), which has already been referred to, and *Dante* (1930), an introduction to the appreciation of Dante's work as a whole. These volumes establish Eliot as the most provocative and perhaps the most important critic of literature now writing in English. Wholly unlike his verse, sometimes academic, sometimes marred by fantastic theories, Eliot's criticism is persuasive and backed by authority. Though his writing lacks bulk, it does not lack profundity. Intensified by learning, sharpened by original apprehensions, his work has exercised an incalculable influence on his times.

LA FIGLIA CHE PIANGE

O quam te memorem virgo . . .

Stand on the highest pavement of the stair—
Lean on a garden urn—
Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair—
Clasp your flowers to you with a pained surprise—
Fling them to the ground and turn
With a fugitive resentment in your eyes:
But weave, weave the sunlight in your hair.

So I would have had him leave,
So I would have had her stand and grieve,
So he would have left

As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,
As the mind deserts the body it has used.

I should find
Some way incomparably light and deft,
Some way we both should understand,
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand.

She turned away, but with the autumn weather
Compelled my imagination many days,
Many days and many hours:
Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers,
And I wonder how they should have been together!
I should have lost a gesture and a pose.
Sometimes these cogitations still amaze
The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.

THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall

Beneath the music from a farther room.
    So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
    And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
    And should I then presume?
    And how should I begin?

. . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in
        upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
    Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
    That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail
        along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a
        screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
    "That is not it at all,
    That is not what I meant, at all."

. . . .

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old. . . . I grow old. . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

MORNING AT THE WINDOW

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,
And along the trampled edges of the street
I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

PRELUDE

The winter evening settles down
With smells of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about his feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

PORTRAIT OF A LADY[1]

I

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—
With "I have saved this afternoon for you";
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
And atmosphere of Juliet's tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.
We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.
"So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room."
—And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets
Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins.
"You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? You are not blind!
How keen you are!)
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
How much it means that I say this to you—
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar!*"
Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite "false note."
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,

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[1] Compare the poem on the same theme on page 436.

Admire the monuments
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks.
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you should hold it in your hands";
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."

I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.
"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.
You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.

"But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends. . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired,
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden,
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down; returning as before
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?
But that's a useless question.
You hardly know when you are coming back;
You will find so much to learn."
My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."
My self-possession flares up for a second;
This is as I had reckoned.
"I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)
Why we have not developed into friends."
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,
They all were sure our feelings would relate
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.
We must leave it now to fate.
You will write, at any rate.

Perhaps it is not too late.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape. . . .
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—
Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
Afternoon gray and smoky, evening yellow and rose;
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
With the smoke coming down above the housetops;
Doubtful, for quite a while
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .
Would she not have the advantage, after all?
This music is successful with a "dying fall"
Now that we talk of dying—
And should I have the right to smile?

CONVERSATION GALANTE

I observe: "Our sentimental friend, the moon!
Or possibly (fantastic, I confess)
It may be Prester John's balloon
Or an old battered lantern hung aloft
To light poor travelers to their distress."
    She then: "How you digress!"

And I then: "Some one frames upon the keys
That exquisite nocturne, with which we explain
The night and moonshine; music which we seize
To body forth our vacuity."
    She then: "Does this refer to me?"
    "Oh, no, it is I who am inane.

"You, madam, are the eternal humorist,
The eternal enemy of the absolute,
Giving our vagrant moods the slightest twist!
With your aid indifferent and imperious
At a stroke our mad poetics to confute—"
    And—"Are we then so serious?"

GERONTION

Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign":
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fräulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last
We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use it for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,

White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.

                                        Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

John Crowe Ransom was born in Pulaski, Tennessee, April 30, 1888, of Scotch-Irish descent. Pulaski, so Ransom informs me, is otherwise distinguished as being the County Seat of Giles County, the birthplace of Sam Davis, the Confederate martyr, and of the Ku Klux Klan—Ransom's own great-uncle taking part in the foundation of the latter. Ransom, the son of a local minister, was educated in his own state and abroad: he received his B.A. at Vanderbilt University in 1909, his B.A. at Oxford in 1923. At the latter he was Rhodes Scholar from Tennessee, taking the "Greats" (classical) course. He has taught at Vanderbilt since 1914, except for two years during which he was with the A.E.F. He was the chief instigator and one of the founders of *The Fugitive,* that bravely experimental journal which did much to disprove Mencken's contention that the "solid South" was a vast "Sahara of the Beaux Arts."

Poems About God appeared in 1919, a raw first book with a tang of bitter humor. Here was no southern gentleman's proverbial courtliness, no unctuous and mincing gallantry; here was a bristling acerbity blurted in a strong if uncertain utterance. The lines range from the roughly powerful (reminding one of a coarser Robert Frost) to the surprisingly banal. During the five-year interval between *Poems About God* and his next volume, Ransom's poetry underwent an almost complete change. Little of the crudeness remains in *Chills and Fever,* by all odds the most distinguished volume of poetry published in 1924. Ransom, it was evident, reacted from the callow simplicities and the tradition of Wonder in words of one syllable; his verse is definitely for mature minds willing not only to allow a mature poet his mixed modes but willing to follow them. It is, at first glance, a curiously involved speech which Ransom uses to clothe his semi-whimsical, semi-ironic philosophy. But beneath his prim and too precise circumlocutions one is made aware of an extraordinarily sensitive lyricist. What adds zest to his verses is the mocking gravity of his speech—a gravity which is sometimes exaggerated to the verge of parody, if a philosopher can achieve that dubious art.

Ransom strikes his note with a sureness that is almost defiant. He can weave patterns that are, at one time, fanciful and learned. His account of a small boy's walk in deep woods ("First Travels of Max") is as fine a macabre piece as anything achieved by Amy Lowell. He can draw portraits of dream-lost mediocrities as sympathetically as Robinson, "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son" being a second cousin to "Miniver Cheevy" and "Bewick Finzer." He can sound the mordant brasses in "Captain Carpenter," the muted violins in "Here Lies a Lady" and the prophetic trumpets in "Spiel of the Three Mountebanks" with equal precision. Such music, half soothing, half stinging, is new in our poetry; the modulations are strange, the cadences charming in their slight irregularities. Ransom knows how to employ the unresolved suspension; he delights in pairing such slant rhymes as "drunkard-conquered," "little-scuttle," "ready-study." But it is not merely the free use of dissonance and assonance which distinguishes his poems; it is what he does with these properties. "Antique Harvesters" breathes the very quixotic spirit of the old South and the Southron's devotion to that spirit; "Lady Lost" is a perfect harmonizing of teasing and tenderness.

Two Gentlemen in Bonds (1927) has the fresh combination of cavalier grace and surprising savagery uttered in a precise softness of speech. But the surprise is not only occasioned by his tempo which is both nervous and drawling. As Mark Van Doren wrote, "He has been at pains to salt his rhymes and pepper his diction with fresh, realistic words; he has wrenched his cadences to fit his wayward thought; he has written with an original and almost acid gayety."

And yet, for all of Ransom's variety, in spite of his ability to play equally well in the spangles of harlequin and the graver habit of *Kapellmeister,* this Southerner will never be a popular poet. His is too elegant a speech to meet with general favor; his vocabulary is meticulous to the point of being over-elaborate, his utterance is so precise as to seem pedantic. The fact that a great part of this particularity is not affectation, but a scholar's gentle mockery, will not save him from the disapproval or the neglect of the public which dreads polysyllabic poets.

Nevertheless, even in a facile, overproductive age, there can be no doubt that these crisp narratives and cerebral lyrics will, in spite of their allusive idiom, find their niche. It will be neither a mean nor a long neglected one. Ransom has already received recognition beyond the borders of patriotic poetry societies. In 1924 the Hogarth Press (London) published *Grace After Meat,* an assembling of ten poems from *Poems About God* and the same number from *Chills and Fever.* It was sponsored by T. S. Eliot and introduced by Robert Graves, who ended his foreword by saying, "Ransom is doing for his own state what Frost has done for New England, Vachel Lindsay for his Middle West, Carl Sandburg for Chicago. Such poets are the forerunners of a national American school that will one day produce a synthesis of all regional contributions." One does not have to echo all of the English writer's prophecy to accord Ransom his distinct and autochthonous place.

BELLS FOR JOHN WHITESIDES' DAUGHTER

There was such speed in her little body,
And such lightness in her footfall,
It is no wonder that her brown study
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.
We looked among orchard trees and beyond,
Where she took arms against her shadow,
Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud
Dripping their snow on the green grass,
Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little
Lady with rod that made them rise
From their noon apple-dreams, and scuttle
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;
In one house we are sternly stopped
To say we are vexed at her brown study,
Lying so primly propped.

SPIEL OF THE THREE MOUNTEBANKS

THE SWARTHY ONE—
Villagers who gather round,
This is Fides, my lean hound.
Bring your bristled village curs
To try his fang and tooth, sweet sirs:
He will rend them, he is savage,
Thinking nothing but to ravage,
Nor with cudgel, fire, rope,
May ye control my misanthrope;
He would tear the moon in the sky
And fly at Heaven, could he fly.
And for his ravening without cease
I have had of him no peace.
Only once I bared the knife
To quit my devil of his life,
But listen, how I heard him say,
"Think you I shall die today?
Since your mother cursed and died,
I am keeping at your side,
We are firmly knit together,
Two ends tugging at one tether,
And you shall see when I shall die
That you are mortal even as I."
Bring your stoutest-hearted curs
If ye would risk him, gentle sirs.

THE THICK ONE—
Countrymen, here's a noble frame,
Humphrey is my elephant's name.
When my father's back was bent
Under steep impediment,
Humphrey came to my possession,
With patient strength for all his passion.
Have ye a mountain to remove?
It is Humphrey's dearest love.
Pile his burden to the skies,
Loose a pestilence of flies,
Foot him in the quick morass
Where no laden beast can pass:

He will staunch his weariless back
And march unswerving on the track.
Have ye seen a back so wide,
Such impenetrable hide?
Nor think ye by this Humphrey hill
Prince Hamlet bare his fardels ill?
Myself I like it not for us
To wear beneath an incubus;
I take offense, but in no rage
May I dispose my heritage;
Though in good time the vast and tough
Shall sink and totter soon enough.
So pile your population up:
They are a drop in Humphrey's cup;
Add all your curses to his pack
To make one straw for Humphrey's back.

THE PALE ONE—
If ye remark how poor I am,
Come, citizens, behold my lamb!
Have ye a lion, ounce, or scourge,
Or any beast of dainty gorge?
Agnus lays his tender youth
Between the very enemy's mouth,
And though he sniff his delicate meat,
He may not bruise that flesh nor eat,
He may not rend him limb from limb,
If Agnus do but bleat on him.
Fierce was my youth, but like a dream
I saw a temple, and a stream,
And where I knelt and washed my sore,
This infant lamb stood on the shore,
He mounted with me from the river.
And still he cries, as brave as ever,
"Lay me down by the lion's side
To match my frailty with his pride;
Fain would I welter in my blood
To teach these lions true lionhood."
So daily Agnus would be slain
But daily is denied again,

And still the hungry lions range
While Agnus waits upon a change;
Only the coursing lions die
And in their deserts mortify.
So bring us lion, leopard, bear,
To try of Agnus without fear,
And ye less gentle than I am,
Come, be instructed of my Lamb.

HERE LIES A LADY

Here lies a lady of beauty and high degree.
Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,
The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant of three,
And of medicos marveling sweetly on her ills.

For either she burned, and her confident eyes would blaze,
And her fingers fly in a manner to puzzle their heads—
What was she making? Why, nothing; she sat in a maze
Of old scraps of laces, snipped into curious shreds—

Or this would pass, and the light of her fire decline
Till she lay discouraged and cold as a thin stalk white and blown,
And would not open her eyes, to kisses, to wine.
The sixth of these states was her last; the cold settled down.

Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I hope ye may thole,
But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and mourning,
In love and great honor we bade God rest her soul
After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.

FIRST TRAVELS OF MAX

As hath been, lo, these many generations,
The best of the Van Vroomans was the youngest;
And even he, in a chevroned sailor's blouse
And tawny curls far from subdued to the cap,
Had slapped old Katie and betaken himself
From games for children. That was because they told
Him never, never to set a wicked foot
Into Fool's Forest, where the devil dwelt.

"Become Saint Michael's sword!" said Max to the stick,
And to the stone, "Be a brand-new revolver!"
Then Max was glad that he had armed so wisely,
As darker grew the wood, and shrill with silence.
All good fairies were helpless here; at night
Whipped in an inch of their lives; weeping, forbidden
To play with strange scared truant little boys
Who didn't belong there. Snakes were allowed there
And lizards and adders—people of age and evil
That lay on their bellies and whispered—no bird nor rabbit.
There were more rotten trees than there were sound ones;
In that wood, timber was degenerate
And rotted almost faster than it grew.
There were no flowers nor apples; too much age.
The only innocent thing in there was Max,
And even he had cursed his little sisters.

The little black tarn rose up almost in his face—
It was as black and sudden as the pit
The Adversary digs in the bowels of earth;
Bubbles were on it, breath of the black beast
(Formed like a spider, white bag for entrails)
Who took that sort of blackness to inhabit
And dangle after bad men in Fool's Forest.
"Must they be bad?" said casuistical Max.
"Mightn't a good boy who stopped saying his prayers
Be allowed to slip into the spider's fingers?"
Max raised his sword—but what can swords do
Against the Prince of the Dark? Max sheathed his point
And crept around the pool.

In the middle of the wood was a Red Witch.
Max half expected her. He never expected
To find a witch's house so dirty and foolish,
A witch with a wide bosom yellow as butter,
Or a witch combing so many obscene things
From her black hair into her scarlet lap.
He never believed there would attempt to sing
The one that taught the rats to squeal and Bashan's
Bull to bellow.

"Littlest and last Van Vrooman, do you come too?"
She knew him, it appeared, would know him better,
The scarlet hulk of hell with a fat bosom,
Pirouetting at the bottom of the forest.
Certainly Max had come, but he was going,
Unequal contests never being commanded
On young knights only armed in innocency.
"When I am a grown man I will come here
And cut your head off!" That was very well;
Not a true heart beating in Christendom
Could have said more, but that for the present would do.
Max went straight home; and nothing chilled him more
Than the company kept him by the witch's laugh
And the witch's song, and the creeping of his flesh.

Max is more firmly domiciliated.
A great house is Van Vrooman, a green slope
South to the sun do the great ones inhabit
And a few children play on the lawn with the nurse.
Max has returned to his play, and you may find him,
His famous curls unsmoothed, if you will call
Where the Van Vroomans live, the tribe Van Vrooman
Live there, at least, when any are at home.

LADY LOST

This morning, there flew up the lane
A timid lady-bird to our bird-bath
And eyed her image dolefully as death;
This afternoon, knocked on our windowpane
To be let in from the rain.

And when I caught her eye
She looked aside, but at the clapping thunder
And sight of the whole earth blazing up like tinder
Looked in on us again most miserably,
Indeed as if she would cry.

So I will go out into the park and say,
"Who has lost a delicate brown-eyed lady
In the West End Section? Or has anybody

Injured some fine woman in some dark way,
Last night or yesterday?

"Let the owner come and claim possession,
No questions will be asked. But stroke her gently
With loving words, and she will evidently
Resume her full soft-haired white-breasted fashion,
And her right home and her right passion."

ANTIQUE HARVESTERS

(*Scene: Of the Mississippi the bank sinister, and of the Ohio the bank sinister*)

Tawny are the leaves turned, but they still hold.
It is the harvest; what shall this land produce?
A meager hill of kernels, a runnel of juice.
Declension looks from our land, it is old.
Therefore let us assemble, dry, gray, spare,
And mild as yellow air.

"I hear the creak of a raven's funeral wing."
The young men would be joying in the song
Of passionate birds; their memories are not long.
What is it thus rehearsed in sable? "Nothing."
Trust not but the old endure, and shall be older
Than the scornful beholder.

We pluck the spindling ears and gather the corn.
One spot has special yield? "On this spot stood
Heroes and drenched it with their only blood."
And talk meets talk, as echoes from the horn
Of the hunter—echoes are the old men's arts,
Ample are the chambers of their hearts.

Here come the hunters, keepers of a rite.
The horn, the hounds, the lank mares coursing by
Under quaint archetypes of chivalry;
And the fox, lovely ritualist, in flight
Offering his unearthly ghost to quarry;
And the fields, themselves to harry.

Resume, harvesters. The treasure is full bronze
Which you will garner for the Lady, and the moon
Could tinge it no yellower than does this noon;
But the gray will quench it shortly—the fields, men, stones.
Pluck fast, dreamers; prove as you rumble slowly
Not less than men, not wholly.

Bare the arm too, dainty youths, bend the knees
Under bronze burdens. And by an autumn tone
As by a gray, as by a green, you will have known
Your famous Lady's image; for so have these.
And if one say that easily will your hands
More prosper in other lands,

Angry as wasp-music be your cry then:
"Forsake the Proud Lady, of the heart of fire,
The look of snow, to the praise of a dwindled choir,
Song of degenerate specters that were men?
The sons of the fathers shall keep her, worthy of
What these have done in love."

True, it is said of our Lady, she ageth.
But see, if you peep shrewdly, she hath not stooped;
Take no thought of her servitors that have drooped,
For we are nothing; and if one talk of death—
Why, the ribs of the earth subsist frail as a breath
If but God wearieth.

PIAZZA PIECE

—I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying
To make you hear. Your ears are soft and small
And listen to an old man not at all;
They want the young men's whispering and sighing.
But see the roses on your trellis dying
And hear the spectral singing of the moon—
For I must have my lovely lady soon.
I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying.

—I am a lady young in beauty waiting
Until my truelove comes, and then we kiss.
But what gray man among the vines is this

Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream?
Back from my trellis, sir, before I scream!
I am a lady young in beauty waiting.

CAPTAIN CARPENTER

Captain Carpenter rose up in his prime
Put on his pistols and went riding out
But had got wellnigh nowhere at that time
Till he fell in with ladies in a rout.

It was a pretty lady and all her train
That played with him so sweetly but before
An hour she'd taken a sword with all her main
And twined him of his nose for evermore.

Captain Carpenter mounted up one day
And rode straightway into a stranger rogue
That looked unchristian but be that as it may
The Captain did not wait upon prologue.

But drew upon him out of his great heart
The other swung against him with a club
And cracked his two legs at the shinny part
And let him roll and stick like any tub.

Captain Carpenter rode many a time
From male and female took he sundry harms
He met the wife of Satan crying "I'm
The she-wolf bids you shall bear no more arms."

Their strokes and counters whistled in the wind
I wish he had delivered half his blows
But where she should have made off like a hind
The bitch bit off his arms at the elbows.

And Captain Carpenter parted with his ears
To a black devil that used him in this wise
O jesus ere his threescore and ten years
Another had plucked out his sweet blue eyes.

Captain Carpenter got up on his roan
And sallied from the gate in hell's despite
I heard him asking in the grimmest tone
If any enemy yet there was to fight?

"To any adversary it is fame
If he risk to be wounded by my tongue
Or burnt in two beneath my red heart's flame
Such are the perils he is cast among.

"But if he can he has a pretty choice
From an anatomy with little to lose
Whether he cut my tongue and take my voice
Or whether it be my round red heart he choose."

It was the neatest knave that ever was seen
Stepping in perfume from his lady's bower
Who at this word put in his merry mien
And fell on Captain Carpenter like a tower.

I would not knock old fellows in the dust
But there lay Captain Carpenter on his back
His weapons were the old heart in his bust
And a blade shook between rotten teeth alack.

The rogue in scarlet and gray soon knew his mind
He wished to get his trophy and depart;
With gentle apology and touch refined
He pierced him and produced the Captain's heart.

God's mercy rest on Captain Carpenter now
I thought him Sirs an honest gentleman
Citizen husband soldier and scholar enow
Let jangling kites eat of him if they can.

But God's deep curses follow after those
That shore him of his goodly nose and ears
His legs and strong arms at the two elbows
And eyes that had not watered seventy years.

The curse of hell upon the sleek upstart
Who got the Captain finally on his back
And took the red red vitals of his heart
And made the kites to whet their beaks clack clack.

BLUE GIRLS

Twirling your blue skirts, traveling the sward
Under the towers of your seminary,
Go listen to your teachers old and contrary
Without believing a word.

Tie the white fillets then about your lustrous hair
And think no more of what will come to pass
Than bluebirds that go walking on the grass
And chattering on the air.

Practice your beauty, blue girls, before it fail;
And I will cry with my loud lips and publish
Beauty which all our power shall never establish,
It is so frail.

For I could tell you a story which is true:
I know a lady with a terrible tongue,
Blear eyes fallen from blue,
All her perfections tarnished—and yet it is not long
Since she was lovelier than any of you.

OLD MAN PONDERED

Three times he crossed our way where with me went
One who is fair and gentle, and it was strange,
But not once glancing did his vision range
Wayward on me, or my most innocent,
But strictly watched his own predicament.
How are old spirits so dead? His eyes seemed true
As mine, he walked by it, it was as blue,
How came it monstered in its fixed intent?

But I will venture how. In his long years
Close-watched and dangerous, many a bright-barbed hate
Burning had smote against the optic gate
To enter and destroy. But the quick gears

Blinked shut the aperture. Else those grim leers
Had won to the inner chamber where sat Hope
To spin and pray, and made her misanthrope,
And bled her courage with a thousand spears.

Thus hate and scorn. And he must guard as well
Against alluring love, whose mild engine
Was perilous too for the lone sitter-in,
So hard consented to her little cell;
The tenderest looks vainly upon him fell,
Of dearest company, lest one light arrow
Be sharpened with a most immortal sorrow.
So had he kept his mansion shut of hell.

Firm and upright he walked for one so old,
Thrice-pondered; and I dare not prophesy
What age must bring me; for I look round bold
And seek my enemies out; and leave untold
The sideway watery dog's-glances I
Send fawning on you, thinking you will not scold.

LEW SARETT

Lew Sarett was born May 16, 1888, in Chicago, Illinois, and reared in the state of Michigan and in the Lake Superior country. He was educated at Beloit and the University of Illinois, receiving his LL.B. at the latter institution in 1916. However, he never practiced law because, as he says, "foot-loose adventures in the woods ruined me for any confining work." After sixteen he spent much of his life in the Rocky Mountains and in the Canadian North; for eight years he worked intermittently as woodsman and guide in that region. He has been a United States Ranger and still spends several months of each year in the remote districts of the National Parks. In this nomadic life on the frontiers of America he has lived much of the time with Indians and backwoods folk; thus he has come to understand the bush country, the voyageur, and the aborigine.

Sarett's first volume, *Many Many Moons*, appeared in 1920. It is, as he calls it, a book of wilderness poems, poems which endeavor to capture the peculiar influence of Indian thought as well as nature in its wilder aspects. His long and impressionistic monolog, "The Box of God" was awarded the Levinson prize (offered through *Poetry*) for 1921. It became the title poem of a subsequent volume, *The Box of God* (1922), a collection which expresses a sort of primitive pantheism; even the lyrics echo the wood sounds and scenes which are familiar to the Indian, even though it is not the Indian himself who speaks. Here are flute notes as well as the rattle of dried gourds and the dull insistence of the tom-tom.

Sarett's more recent lyrics show a wider range; there is social significance in such verses as "Feud," which is intensified by a passion personal as well as racial. A third volume, *Slow Smoke* (1925), reveals an increase in technique and a wider outlook upon life.

IRON-WIND DANCES

Over and under
The shaking sky,
The war-drums thunder
When I dance by!—
Ho! a warrior proud,
I dance on a cloud,
For my ax shall feel
The enemy reel;
My heart shall thrill
To a bloody kill,—
Ten Sioux dead
Split open of head!—
Look! to the West!—
The sky-line drips,—
Blood from the breast!
Blood from the lips!
Ho! when I dance by,
The war-drums thunder
Over and under
The shaking sky.
Beat, beat on the drums,
For the Thunderbird comes.
Wuh!
Wuh!

FEUD

Poor wayworn creature! Oh, sorely harried deer,
What drove you, quivering like a poplar-blade,
To refuge with my herd? What holds you here
Within my meadow, broken and afraid?

Tilting your nose to tainted air, you thrill
And freeze to wailing wolves! Fear you the sound
Of the coyotes eager for a tender kill?
Or yet the baying of the hunter's hound?

Let fall your anguish, harried one, and rest;
Bed yourself down among your kin, my cattle;
Sleep unperturbed. No spoiler shall molest
You here this night, for I shall wage your battle.

There was a day when coyotes in a pack,
Wolves of another hue, another breed,
With Christ upon their lips, set out to track
Me down and drop me, for my blood, my creed.

Oh, hunted creature, once I knew the thud
Of padded feet that put you into flight,
The bugle-cry, suffused with lust for blood,
That trembled in the silver bell of night.

I knew your frenzied rocky run, the burst
Of lungs, the rivers of fire in every vein;
I knew your foaming lip, your boundless thirst,
The rain of molten-hammering in your brain.

Abide with me, then, against the wolves' return,
For I shall carry on the feud for you;
And it shall be, to me, of small concern
If the wolf-hearts walk on four soft feet or two.

Oh, let them come! And I shall burn their flanks
With a blast of hell to end their revelry,
And whistle molten silver through their ranks,
Laughing—one round for you, and one for me.

TO A WILD GOOSE OVER DECOYS

O lonely trumpeter, coasting down the sky,
Like a winter leaf blown from the bur-oak tree
By whipping winds, and flapping silverly
Against the sun,—I know your lonely cry.

I know the worn wild heart that bends your flight
And circles you above this beckoning lake,
Eager of neck, to find the honking drake
Who speaks of reedy refuge for the night.

I know the sudden rapture that you fling
In answer to our friendly gander's call—
Halloo! Beware decoys!—or you will fall
With a silver bullet whistling in your wing.

Beat on your weary flight across the blue!
Beware, O traveler, of our gabbling geese!
Beware this weedy counterfeit of peace!—
Oh, I was once a passing bird like you.

HANIEL LONG

Haniel Long was born in Rangoon, Burma, March 9, 1888, and was educated at Exeter and Harvard. He has been teaching for some years at the Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with intervals of travel in Europe and the Far West.

Poems (1920) is one of the shyest volumes ever issued; even its fugitive fancies are apologetically reticent. But there is humor in Long, though his whimsicality is as modest as his unassertive and infrequent lyrics.

DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES

They say that dead men tell no tales!

Except of barges with red sails
And sailors mad for nightingales;

Except of jongleurs stretched at ease
Beside old highways through the trees;

Except of dying moons that break
The hearts of lads who lie awake;

Except of fortresses in shade,
And heroes crumbled and betrayed.

But dead men tell no tales, they say!

Except old tales that burn away
The stifling tapestries of day:

Old tales of life, of love and hate,
Of time and space, and will, and fate.

SONG

Poppies paramour the girls;
  Lilies put the boys to bed;
Death is nothing else than this
  After everything is said.

They are safe and shall not fade,
  After everything is done,
Past the solace of the shade
  Or the rescue of the sun.

ALINE KILMER

Aline (Murray) Kilmer, step-daughter of Henry Mills Alden, the late editor-in-chief of *Harper's Magazine*, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1888. She was married to Joyce Kilmer in 1909 and after his death, during battle in France, began to deliver lectures, starting in 1917. Since her youth she has lived in New York.

Candles That Burn (1919), her first volume, reveals a personal warmth. Here is a domesticated flame, a quiet but none the less colorful hearth-fire. By its light Mrs. Kilmer's world is revealed with a quaintly individualized grace. Her poems about her children are particularly well characterized. *Vigils* (1921) is a more ambitious offering. The nimble dexterity of "Unlearning," the banter of "Experience" and the clean fervor of "Things" display Mrs. Kilmer as a distinct personality.

Early in 1925 Mrs. Kilmer's third volume appeared. *The Poor King's Daughter* has the grace of the preceding collections plus an ironic self-appraisal which even the sharpest of Mrs. Kilmer's earlier verses did not lead one to expect. The contrasts of her expression may best be observed in *Selected Poems* (1929).

EXPERIENCE

Deborah danced, when she was two,
As buttercups and daffodils do;

Spirited, frail, naïvely bold,
Her hair a ruffled crest of gold.
And whenever she spoke her voice went singing
Like water up from a fountain springing.

But now her step is quiet and slow;
She walks the way primroses go;
Her hair is yellow instead of gilt,
Her voice is losing its lovely lilt;
And in place of her wild, delightful ways
A quaint precision rules her days.

For Deborah now is three, and, oh,
She knows so much that she did not know.

THINGS[1]

Sometimes when I am at tea with you,
  I catch my breath
At a thought that is old as the world is old
  And more bitter than death.

It is that the spoon that you just laid down
  And the cup that you hold
May be here shining and insolent
  When you are still and cold.

Your careless note that I laid away
  May leap to my eyes like flame,
When the world has almost forgotten your voice
  Or the sound of your name.

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[1] Compare this poem with Conrad Aiken's "Bread and Music" on page 596.

The golden Virgin da Vinci drew
May smile on over my head,
And daffodils nod in the silver vase
When you are dead.

So let moth and dust corrupt and thieves
Break through and I shall be glad,
Because of the hatred I bear to things
Instead of the love I had.

For life seems only a shuddering breath,
A smothered, desperate cry;
And things have a terrible permanence
When people die.

ALAN SEEGER

Alan Seeger was born in New York, June 22, 1888. When he was still a baby, his parents moved to Staten Island, where he remained through boyhood. Later, there were several other migrations, including a sojourn in Mexico, where Seeger spent the most impressionable years of his youth. In 1906 he entered Harvard; became one of the editors of the *Harvard Monthly;* returned to New York in 1910 and in 1913 set off for Paris—"a departing point," wrote William Archer, "which may fairly be called his Hegira, the turning point of his history." 1914 came, and the European war had not entered its third week when, along with some forty of his fellow-countrymen, Seeger enlisted in the Foreign Legion of France. He was in action almost continually, serving on various fronts. On July 1, 1916, a new advance began; a few days later the Legion was ordered to clear the Germans out of the village of Belloy-en-Santerre. On the fourth of July Seeger advanced in the first rush and his squad was practically wiped out by hidden machine-gun fire. Seeger fell, mortally wounded, and died the next morning.

Seeger's literary promise was far greater than his actual accomplishment. With the exception of his one famous poem, there is little of importance in his collected *Poems* (published, with an Introduction by William Archer, in 1916). His letters from the front (published in 1917) show a keener sense of perception. Had he lived a few years more, he might have been an important recorder of a changed and changing world.

"I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH"

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath—
It may be I shall pass him still.
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

WILLARD WATTLES

Willard (Austin) Wattles was born at Bayneville, Kansas, July 8, 1888. He received his A.B. at the University of Kansas in 1909 and since 1910 has divided his time between teaching English and harvesting wheat.

His first book was an anthology, *Sunflowers: A Book of Kansas Poems* (1914), to which he also contributed. *Lanterns in Gethsemane* (1918) consists, almost entirely, of mystical and religious poems. There is, however, little sermonizing unction and less cant in these pages. There is a fresh vibrancy, a buoyance that glows against its theological background. Many of Wattles' verses have the peculiar grace of a parable joined to a nursery rhyme; "The Builder," "Jericho" and a few others seem like scraps of the Scripture rendered by Mother Goose.

THE BUILDER

Smoothing a cypress beam
With a scarred hand,
I saw a carpenter
In a far land.

Down past the flat roofs
Poured the white sun;
But still he bent his back,
The patient one.

And I paused surprised
In that queer place
To find an old man
With a haunting face.

"Who art thou, carpenter,
Of the bowed head;
And what buildest thou?"
"Heaven," he said.

CREEDS

How pitiful are little folk—
They seem so very small;
They look at stars, and think they are
Denominational.

CONRAD AIKEN

Conrad (Potter) Aiken was born at Savannah, Georgia, August 5, 1889. He attended Harvard, was chosen class poet during his senior year, received his A.B. in 1912, traveled extensively for three years, and since then devoted all his time to literature, living at South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, until 1921. In that year he moved his family to England; a few years later he bought a house on the Sussex coast at Rye. In 1928 he returned to America.

The outstanding feature of Aiken's work is its rapid adaptability and its slow growth. His first volume, *Earth Triumphant and Other Tales in Verse* (1914), is the Keats tradition crossed, paraphrased, and vulgarized by Masefield. *Turns and Movies* (1916) is a complete change; Masefield is exchanged for Masters. But in the less conspicuous half of this book Aiken begins to speak with his true voice. Here he is the natural musician, playing with new rhythms, haunting cadences. *The Jig of Forslin* (1916) is an elaboration of his method. In this volume Aiken goes back to the narrative—or rather, to a series of loosely connected stories—and, reënforced by studies in analytical psychology, explores "the process of vicarious wish fulfillment by which civilized man enriches his circumscribed life."

Nocturne of Remembered Spring (1917), *The Charnel Rose* (1918) and *The House of Dust* (1920) are packed with a tired but often beautiful music. Even though it is enlivened by injections of T. S. Eliot's conversational idiom, the effect is frequently misty and monotonous. Rain seems to fall persistently through these volumes; dust blows down the street; the shadows blur; everything dissolves in a wash of boredom and forgetfulness. Even the poignance seems on the point of falling asleep.

Often Aiken loses himself in this watery welter of language. In trying to create a closer *liaison* between poetry and music, he places so much importance on the rise and fall of syllables that his very excess of melody defeats his purpose. His verse, thus, gains greatly on the sensuous side, but loses, in its murmuring indefiniteness, that vitality of speech which is the very blood of poetry. It is a subaqueous music, strangely like the magic of Debussy.

This weakening overinsistence on sound does not prevent Aiken from attaining many exquisite effects. Primarily, a lyric poet, he condenses an emotion in a few lines; some of his best moments are these "lapses" into tune. The music of the Morning Song from "Senlin" (in *The Charnel Rose*) is rich with subtleties of rhythm. But it is much more than a lyrical movement. Beneath the flow and flexibility of these lines there is a delightful whimsicality, a summoning of those immensities that loom behind the casual moments of everyday.

Punch: The Immortal Liar is an almost complete *volte face*. After it seemed established that Aiken's gift was limited to the twitching of overrefined nerves, to a too ready response to gloomy subconsciousness, the poet strikes out toward a naked directness. Dazzling though the first half of this work is, it is the second part which attains the heights. Here Punch, stripped of his mask of braggadocio, is revealed as the solitary, frustrated dreamer;

a pitiful puppet floundering in a net he cannot see; jerked and gesticulating without knowledge of the strings which direct him—a symbol, in short, of man as marionette. This second part of *Punch* contains, not only Aiken's most delicate exposition of the inhibited soul, but some of the finest lyrics he has produced. Whatever the theme, the musician is triumphant.

Priapus and the Pool (1922) is preponderantly lyrical, containing twenty-five songs, several of which are as moving as those of any contemporary American singer. The succeeding volume, *The Pilgrimage of Festus* (1923), returns to the symphonic form; beneath its imaginative outlines it is an extended essay in epistemology. Festus is the lineal descendant of Aiken's own Senlin and a not distant relative of Ibsen's Peer Gynt. A revised and enlarged edition of *Priapus and the Pool* appeared in 1925.

Aiken, the keenest critic of his own poetry, has been quick to see its limitations as well as its potentialities. In a self-analysis in which he confessed that his verse has groped continually toward symphonic arrangement, Aiken wrote, "Here I give myself away as being in quest of a sort of absolute poetry, a poetry in which the intention is not so much to arouse an emotion, or to persuade of a reality, as to employ such emotion or sense of reality (tangentially struck) with the same cool detachment with which a composer employs notes or chords."

Here we are at the heart of the contradiction: the paradox that, though Aiken is undoubtedly one of the most musical of living poets, he is one of the least popular. An audience that prefers its emotion outright, that craves a palpable reality, resents (or, worse, ignores) the nuance "tangentially struck." The emphasis on overtone and implication creates, too often, an obscure pantomime; it is, as Aiken himself was quick to see, "a prestidigitation in which the juggler's bottles or balls are a little too apt, unfortunately, to be altogether invisible." What is even more obvious, an audience is quick to sense the performer's uncertainty. This—until the most recent work—has been Aiken's undoing. He has fancied himself as a symphonist when he was, preëminently, a lyricist, albeit a lyricist neither pure nor simple. More than any contemporary, except T. S. Eliot (who, I suspect, has learned several tricks in juxtaposition and dissonance from Aiken) he has evolved a subtly subjective poetry which flows as smoothly, as surprisingly as the stream of the subconscious. He has given formlessness a form, has brought tortured self-analysis to a pitch of pure poetry, and (whether in the suspensions of the famous "Morning Song of Senlin" or the more certain modulations of "Tetélestai") he has registered an immediacy of anguish. Aiken's growth in tonal surety must be evident to all but the tone-deaf.

"The Road" is more than a compelling dream-picture; in it Aiken contradicts his own credo and participates in the struggle of humanity. "At a Concert of Music" and "Annihilation" bring the earlier modulations to a perfect cadence; the later *Preludes* suggest, as far as words ever can, that "absolute poetry" to which Aiken has so often tuned his muted horns and violas *con sordino.* A representative *Selected Poems* was published in 1929, winning Aiken the Pulitzer Prize the year following.

Besides his poetry, Aiken has written a host of reviews, some of them containing extraordinarily sensitive criticism. *Scepticisms* (1919) is a provocative and valuable set of studies. His anthologies—*Modern American Poets* (1922) and *American Poetry, 1671-1928*—suffer from Aiken's predilection for experimental and abstract verse, but are far superior to the ordinary compilation. He edited the first *Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson* which appeared in England in 1924. In that year his prose began to attract attention. *Bring! Bring!* (1925) and *Costumes by Eros* (1928) are collections of introspective short stories in a successful if not altogether new genre. *Blue Voyage* (1927) is less influenced, a novel closely woven and strangely unresolved.

BREAD AND MUSIC

Music I heard with you was more than music,
And bread I broke with you was more than bread;
Now that I am without you, all is desolate;
All that was once so beautiful is dead.

Your hands once touched this table and this silver,
And I have seen your fingers hold this glass.
These things do not remember you, belovèd,
And yet your touch upon them will not pass.

For it was in my heart you moved among them,
And blessed them with your hands and with your eyes;
And in my heart they will remember always,—
They knew you once, O beautiful and wise.

MIRACLES

Twilight is spacious, near things in it seem far,
And distant things seem near.
Now in the green west hangs a yellow star.
And now across old waters you may hear

The profound gloom of bells among still trees,
Like a rolling of huge bowlders beneath seas.

Silent as thought in evening contemplation
Weaves the bat under the gathering stars.
Silent as dew, we seek new incarnation,
Meditate new avatars.
In a clear dusk like this
Mary climbed up the hill to seek her son,
To lower him down from the cross, and kiss
The mauve wounds, every one.

Men with wings
In the dusk walked softly after her.
She did not see them, but may have felt
The winnowed air around her stir;
She did not see them, but may have known
Why her son's body was light as a little stone.
She may have guessed that other hands were there
Moving the watchful air.

Now, unless persuaded by searching music
Which suddenly opens the portals of the mind,
We guess no angels,
And are contented to be blind.
Let us blow silver horns in the twilight,
And lift our hearts to the yellow star in the green,
To find perhaps, if, while the dew is rising,
Clear things may not be seen.

MORNING SONG FROM "SENLIN"

It is morning, Senlin says, and in the morning
When the light drips through the shutters like the dew,
I arise, I face the sunrise,
And do the things my fathers learned to do.
Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops
Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die,
And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet
Stand before a glass and tie my tie.

Vine-leaves tap my window,
Dew-drops sing to the garden stones,
The robin chirps in the chinaberry tree
Repeating three clear tones.

It is morning. I stand by the mirror
And tie my tie once more.
While waves far off in a pale rose twilight
Crash on a white sand shore.
I stand by a mirror and comb my hair:
How small and white my face!—

The green earth tilts through a sphere of air
And bathes in a flame of space.
There are houses hanging above the stars
And stars hung under a sea . . .
And a sun far off in a shell of silence
Dapples my walls for me. . . .

It is morning, Senlin says, and in the morning
Should I not pause in the light to remember God?
Upright and firm I stand on a star unstable,
He is immense and lonely as a cloud.
I will dedicate this moment before my mirror
To him alone, for him I will comb my hair.
Accept these humble offerings, clouds of silence!
I will think of you as I descend the stair.

Vine-leaves tap my window,
The snail-track shines on the stones;
Dew-drops flash from the chinaberry tree
Repeating two clear tones.

It is morning, I awake from a bed of silence,
Shining I rise from the starless waters of sleep.
The walls are about me still as in the evening,
I am the same, and the same name still I keep.
The earth revolves with me, yet makes no motion,
The stars pale silently in a coral sky.
In a whistling void I stand before my mirror,
Unconcerned, and tie my tie.

There are horses neighing on far-off hills
Tossing their long white manes,
And mountains flash in the rose-white dusk,
Their shoulders black with rains. . . .
It is morning, I stand by the mirror
And surprise my soul once more;
The blue air rushes above my ceiling,
There are suns beneath my floor. . . .

. . . It is morning, Senlin says, I ascend from darkness
And depart on the winds of space for I know not where;
My watch is wound, a key is in my pocket,
And the sky is darkened as I descend the stair.
There are shadows across the windows, clouds in heaven,
And a god among the stars; and I will go
Thinking of him as I might think of daybreak
And humming a tune I know. . . .

Vine-leaves tap at the window,
Dew-drops sing to the garden stones,
The robin chirps in the chinaberry tree
Repeating three clear tones.

THE PUPPET DREAMS

(*From "Punch: The Immortal Liar"*)

There is a fountain in a wood
Where wavering lies a moon:
It plays to the slowly falling leaves
A sleepy tune.

. . . The peach-trees lean upon a wall
Of gold and ivory:
The peacock spreads his tail, the leaves
Fall silently. . . .

There, amid silken sounds and wine
And music idly broken,
The drowsy god observes his world
With no word spoken.

Arcturus, rise! Orion, fall! . . .
The white-winged stars obey. . . .
Or else he greets his Fellow-God;
And there, in the dusk, they play

A game of chess with stars for pawns
And a silver moon for queen:
Immeasurable as clouds, above
A chess-board world they lean

And thrust their hands amid their beards,
And utter words profound
That shake the star-swung firmament
With a fateful sound! . . .

. . . The peach-trees lean upon a wall
Of gold and ivory;
The peacock spreads his tail; the leaves
Fall silently. . . .

THE ROOM

Through that window—all else being extinct
Except itself and me—I saw the struggle
Of darkness against darkness. Within the room
It turned and turned, dived downward. Then I saw
How order might—if chaos wished—become:
And saw the darkness crush upon itself,
Contracting powerfully; it was as if
It killed itself, slowly: and with much pain.
Pain. The scene was pain, and nothing but pain.
What else, when chaos draws all forces inward
To shape a single leaf? . . .
                                        For the leaf came
Alone and shining in the empty room;
After a while the twig shot downward from it;
And from the twig a bough; and then the trunk,
Massive and coarse; and last the one black root.
The black root cracked the walls. Boughs burst the window:
The great tree took possession.

Tree of trees!
Remember (when time comes) how chaos died
To shape the shining leaf. Then turn, have courage,
Wrap arms and roots together, be convulsed
With grief, and bring back chaos out of shape.
I will be watching then as I watch now.
I will praise darkness now, but then the leaf.

AND IN THE HANGING GARDENS—

And in the hanging gardens there is rain
From midnight until one, striking the leaves
And bells of flowers, and stroking boles of planes,
And drawing slow arpeggios over pools
And stretching strings of sound from eaves to ferns.
The princess reads. The knave of diamond sleeps.
The king is drunk, and flings a golden goblet
Down from the turret window (curtained with rain)
Into the lilacs.
And at one o'clock
The vulcan under the garden wakes and beats
The gong upon his anvil. Then the rain
Ceases, but gently ceases, dripping still,
And sound of falling water fills the dark
As leaves grow bold and upright, and as eaves
Part with water. The princess turns the page
Beside the candle, and between two braids
Of golden hair. And reads: "From there I went
Northward a journey of four days, and came
To a wild village in the hills, where none
Was living save the vulture and the rat
And one old man who laughed but could not speak.
The roofs were fallen in, the well grown over
With weed. And it was here my father died.
Then eight days further, bearing slightly west,
The cold wind blowing sand against our faces,
The food tasting of sand. And as we stood
By the dry rock that marks the highest point
My brother said: 'Not too late is it yet
To turn, remembering home.' And we were silent
Thinking of home." The princess shuts her eyes

And feels the tears forming beneath her eyelids
And opens them, and tears fall on the page.
The knave of diamonds in the darkened room
Throws off his covers, sleeps, and snores again.
The king goes slowly down the turret stairs
To find the goblet.
                              And at two o'clock
The vulcan in his smithy underground
Under the hanging gardens, where the drip
Of rain among the clematis and ivy
Still falls from sipping flower to purple flower
Smites twice his anvil, and the murmur comes
Among the roots and vines. The princess reads:
"As I am sick, and cannot write you more,
And have not long to live, I give this letter
To him, my brother, who will bear it south
And tell you how I died. Ask how it was,
There in the northern desert, where the grass
Was withered, and the horses, all but one,
Perished . . ." The princess drops her golden head
Upon the page between her two white arms
And golden braids. The knave of diamonds wakes
And at his window in the darkened room
Watches the lilacs tossing, where the king
Seeks for the goblet.
                              And at three o'clock
The moon inflames the lilac heads, and thrice
The vulcan, in his root-bound smithy, clangs
His anvil; and the sounds creep softly up
Among the vines and walls. The moon is round,
Round as a shield above the turret top.
The princess blows her candle out, and weeps
In the pale room, where scent of lilacs comes,
Weeping, with hands across her eyelids, thinking
Of withered grass, withered by sandy wind.
The knave of diamonds, in his darkened room,
Holds in his hands a key, and softly steps
Along the corridor, and slides the key
Into the door that guards her. Meanwhile, slowly,
The king, with raindrops on his beard and hands,
And dripping sleeves, climbs up the turret stairs,

Holding the goblet upright in one hand;
And pauses on the midmost step, to taste
One drop of wine, wherewith wild rain has mixed.

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL

This is the shape of the leaf, and this of the flower,
And this the pale bole of the tree
Which watches its bough in a pool of unwavering water
In a land we never shall see.

The thrush on the bough is silent, the dew falls softly,
In the evening is hardly a sound. . . .
And the three beautiful pilgrims who come here together
Touch lightly the dust of the ground.

Touch it with feet that trouble the dust but as wings do,
Come shyly together, are still,
Like dancers who wait in a pause of the music, for music
The exquisite silence to fill . . .

This is the thought of the first, and this of the second,
And this the grave thought of the third:
"Linger we thus for a moment, palely expectant,
And silence will end, and the bird

"Sing the pure phrase, sweet phrase, clear phrase in the twilight
To fill the blue bell of the world;
And we, who on music so leaflike have drifted together,
Leaflike apart shall be whirled

"Into what but the beauty of silence, silence forever? . . ."
. . . This is the shape of the tree,
And the flower and the leaf, and the three pale beautiful pilgrims:
This is what you are to me.

THE ROAD

Three then came forward out of darkness, one
An old man bearded, his old eyes red with weeping,

A peasant, with hard hands. "Come now," he said,
"And see the Road, for which our people die.
Twelve miles of road we've made, a little only,
Westward winding. Of human blood and stone
We build; and in a thousand years will come
Beyond the hills to sea."
I went with them,
Taking a lantern, which upon their faces
Showed years and grief; and in a time we came
To the wild road which wound among wild hills
Westward; and so along this road we stopped,
Silent, thinking of all the dead men there
Compounded with sad clay. Slowly we moved:
For they were old and weak, had given all
Their life to build this twelve poor miles of road,
Muddy, under the rain. And in my hand,
Turning the lantern here or there, I saw
Deep holes of water where the raindrop splashed,
And rainfilled footprints in the grass, and heaps
Of broken stone, and rusted spades and picks,
And helves of axes. And the old man spoke,
Holding my wrist: "Three hundred years it took
To build these miles of road: three hundred years;
And human lives unnumbered. But the day
Will come when it is done." Then spoke another,
One not so old, but old, whose face was wrinkled:
"And when it comes, our people will all sing
For joy, passing from east to west, or west
To east, returning, with the light behind them;
All meeting in the road and singing there."
And the third said: "The road will be their life;
A heritage of blood. Grief will be in it,
And beauty out of grief. And I can see
How all the women's faces will be bright.
In that time, laughing, they will remember us.
Blow out your lantern now, for day is coming."

My lantern blown out, in a little while
We climbed in long light up a hill, where climbed
The dwindling road, and ended in a field.
Peasants were working in the field, bowed down

With unrewarded work and grief and years
Of pain. And as we passed them, one man fell
Into a furrow that was bright with water
And gave a cry that was half cry, half song—
"The road . . . the road . . . the road . . ." And all then fell
Upon their knees and sang.
We four passed on
Over the hills, to westward. . . . Then I felt
How tears ran down my face, tears without end,
And knew that all my life henceforth was weeping,
Weeping, thinking of human grief, and human
Endeavor fruitless in a world of pain.
And when I held my hands up they were old;
I knew my face would not be young again.

ANNIHILATION

While the blue noon above us arches
And the poplar sheds disconsolate leaves,
Tell me again why love bewitches
And what love gives.

Is it the trembling finger that traces
The eyebrow's curve, the curve of the cheek?
The mouth that quivers, while the hand caresses,
But cannot speak?

No, not these, not in these is hidden
The secret, more than in other things:
Not only the touch of a hand can gladden
Till the blood sings.

It is the leaf that falls between us,
The bell that murmurs, the shadows that move,
The autumnal sunlight that fades upon us,
These things are love.

It is the "No, let us sit here longer,"
The "Wait till tomorrow," the "Once I knew"—
These trifles, said as you touch my finger
And the clock strikes two.

The world is intricate, and we are nothing.
It is the complex world of grass,
The twig on the path, a look of loathing,
Feelings that pass—

These are the secret; and I could hate you
When, as I lean for another kiss,
I see in your eyes that I do not meet you,
And that love is this.

Rock meeting rock can know love better
Than eyes that stare or lips that touch.
All that we know in love is bitter,
And it is not much.

THE QUARREL

Suddenly, after the quarrel, while we waited,
Disheartened, silent, with downcast looks, nor stirred
Eyelid nor finger, hopeless both, yet hoping
Against all hope to unsay the sundering word:

While all the room's stillness deepened, deepened about us,
And each of us crept his thought's way to discover
How, with as little sound as the fall of a leaf,
The shadow had fallen, and lover quarreled with lover;

And while, in the quiet, I marveled—alas, alas—
At your deep beauty, your tragic beauty, torn
As the pale flower is torn by the wanton sparrow—
This beauty, pitied and loved, and now forsworn;

It was then, when the instant darkened to its darkest,—
When faith was lost with hope, and the rain conspired
To strike its gray arpeggios against our heartstrings,—
When love no longer dared, and scarcely desired:

It was then that suddenly, in the neighbor's room,
The music started: that brave quartette of strings
Breaking out of the stillness, as out of our stillness,
Like the indomitable heart of life that sings

When all is lost; and startled from our sorrow,
Tranced from our grief by that diviner grief,
We raised remembering eyes, each looked at other,
Blinded with tears of joy; and another leaf

Fell silently as that first; and in the instant
The shadow had gone, our quarrel became absurd;
And we rose, to the angelic voices of the music,
And I touched your hand, and we kissed, without a word.

"WHEN THE TREE BARES"

When the tree bares, the music of it changes:
Hard and keen is the sound, long and mournful;
Pale are the poplar boughs in the evening light
Above my house, against a slate-cold cloud.
When the house ages and the tenants leave it,
Crickets sing in the tall grass by the threshold;
Spider, by the cold mantel, hangs his web.
Here, in a hundred years from that clear season
When first I came here, bearing lights and music,
To this old ghostly house my ghost will come,—
Pause in the half-light, turn by the poplar, glide
Above tall grasses through the broken door.
Who will say that he saw—or the dusk deceived him—
A mist with hands of mist blow down from the tree
And open the door and enter and close it after?
Who will say that he saw, as midnight struck
Its tremulous golden twelve, a light in the window,
And first heard music, as of an old piano,
Music remote, as if it came from the earth,
Far down; and then, in the quiet, eager voices?
". . . Houses grow old and die, houses have ghosts.
Once in a hundred years we return, old house,
And live once more." . . . And then the ancient answer,
In a voice not human, but more like the creak of boards
Or a rattle of panes in the wind—"Not as the owner,
But as a guest you come, to fires not lit
By hands of yours. . . . Through these long-silent chambers
Move slowly, turn, return, and bring once more
Your lights and music. It will be good to talk."

PRELUDE

This is not you? These phrases are not you?
That pomegranate of verses was not you?
The green bright leaf not you, nor the gold fruit
Burning amongst the leaves,—hot fruit of gold,—
Nor bird, nor bough, nor bole, nor heaven's blue? . . .
Alas, dear woman, I have sung in vain.

Let me dishevel then once more the leaves
Of Cupid's bright thesaurus, and there find
The word of words, the crimson seed of seeds,
The aureate sound of sounds; and out of this
Conceive once more your beauty, and in terms
Your feminine keen eye will not disdain.

For this is you: on April page it is,
Again on June, and once more on December;
On August page I find it twice; and March
Chronicles it in footnote; and July
Asserts it roundly. Thus, from page to page,
I find you many times in many terms.

It is a snowflake, which is like a star,
And melts upon the hand; it is a cobweb,
Shot with silver, that from the golden lip
Of April's dandelion hangs to the grass;
It is a raindrop,—of tremendous worth,—
Which slides the whole length of a lilac leaf. . . .

This is not you? these symbols are not you?
Not snowflake, cobweb, raindrop? . . . Woman, woman,
You are too literal, too strict with me.
What would you have? Some simple copper coin—
I love you, you are lovely, I adore you?
Or (better still) dumb silence, and a look?

No, no, this will not do; I am not one
For whom these silences are sovereign;
The pauses in the music are not music,
Although they make the music what it is.

Therefore I thumb once more the god's thesaurus,
For phrase and praise, and find it all for you.

It is a star which might be thought a snowflake,
Lost in a twinkling; it is a dandelion
Shrouded with silver brightness; it is a leaf
Which lets the raindrop go, but keeps its light. . . .
It is the purple veining in the white
That makes the pure throat of the iris pure. . . .

Yet you would have me say your hair is Helen's,—
Your gait angelic; while I turn from these
To the vast pages of that manuscript
On which the stars are stars, the world a world;
And there I find you written down, between
Arcturus and a primrose and the sea.

CLOISTER

So, in the evening, to the simple cloister:
This place of boughs, where sounds of water, softly,
Lap on the stones. And this is what you are:
Here, in this dusty room, to which you climb
By four steep flights of stairs. The door is closed:
The furies of the city howl behind you:
The last bell plunges rock-like to the sea:
The horns of taxis wail in vain. You come
Once more, at evening, to this simple cloister;
Hushed by the quiet walls, you stand at peace.

What ferns of thought are these, the cool and green,
Dripping with moisture, that festoon these walls?
What water-lights are these, whose pallid rings
Dance with the leaves, or speckle the pale stones?
What spring is this, that bubbles the cold sand,
Urging the sluggish grains of white and gold? . . .
Peace. The delicious silence throngs with ghosts
Of wingèd sound and shadow. These are you.

Now in the evening, in the simple cloister,
You stand and wait; you stand and listen, waiting
For wingèd sounds, and wingèd silences,

And long-remembered shadows. Here the rock
Lets down its vine of many-colored flowers:
Waiting for you, or waiting for the lizard
To move his lifted claw, or shift his eye
Quick as a jewel. Here the lizard waits
For the slow snake to slide among cold leaves.
And, on the bough that arches the deep pool,
Lapped in a sound of water, the brown thrush
Waits, too, and listens, till his silence makes
Silence as deep as song. And time becomes
A timeless crystal, an eternity,
In which the gone and coming are at peace.

What bird is this, whose silence fills the trees
With rich delight? What leaves and boughs are these,
What lizard, and what snake? . . . The bird is gone:
And while you wait, another comes and goes,—
Another and another; yet your eye,
Although it has not moved, can scarcely say
If birds have come and gone,—so quick, so brief,—
Or if the thrush who waits there is the same. . . .
The snake and lizard change, yet are the same:
The flowers, many-colored, on the vine,
Open and close their multitude of stars,—
Yet are the same. . . . And all these things are you.

Thus, in the evening, in the simple cloister,
Eternity adds ring to ring, the darker
Beyond the brighter; and your silence fills
With such a world of worlds,—so still, so deep,—
As never voice could speak, whether it were
The ocean's or the bird's. The night comes on:
You wait and listen, in the darkened room,
To all these ghosts of change. And they are you.

AT A CONCERT OF MUSIC

Be still, while the music rises about us: the deep enchantment
 Towers, like a forest of singing leaves and birds,
Built for an instant by the heart's troubled beating,
 Beyond all power of words.

And while you are silent, listening, I escape you,
  And I run, by a secret path, through that bright wood
To another time, forgotten, and another woman,
  And another mood.

Then, too, the music's pure algebra of enchantment
  Wrought all about us a bird-voice-haunted grove.
Then, too, I escaped, as now, to an earlier moment
  And a brighter love.

Alas! Can I never have peace in the shining instant?
  The hard bright crystal of being, in time and space?
Must I always touch, in the moment, a remembered moment,
  A remembered face?

Absolve me: I would adore you, had I the secret,
  With all this music's power, for yourself alone:
I would try to answer, in the world's chaotic symphony,
  Your one clear tone:

But alas, alas, being everything you are nothing;
  The history of all my life is in your face;
And all I can grasp is an earlier, more haunted moment,
  And a happier place.

TETELESTAI

I

How shall we praise the magnificence of the dead,
The great man humbled, the haughty brought to dust?
Is there a horn we should not blow as proudly
For the meanest of us all, who creeps his days,
Guarding his heart from blows, to die obscurely?
I am no king, have laid no kingdoms waste,
Taken no princes captive, led no triumphs
Of weeping women through long walls of trumpets;
Say rather, I am no one, or an atom;
Say rather, two great gods, in a vault of starlight,
Play ponderingly at chess, and at the game's end
One of the pieces, shaken, falls to the floor
And runs to the darkest corner; and that piece

Forgotten there, left motionless, is I. . . .
Say that I have no name, no gifts, no power,
Am only one of millions, mostly silent;
One who came with eyes and hands and a heart,
Looked on beauty, and loved it, and left it.
Say that the fates of time and space obscured me,
Led me a thousand ways to pain, bemused me,
Wrapped me in ugliness; and like great spiders
Dispatched me at their leisure. . . . Well, what then?
Should I not hear, as I lie down in dust,
The horns of glory blowing above my burial?

II

Morning and evening opened and closed above me:
Houses were built above me; trees let fall
Yellowing leaves upon me, hands of ghosts;
Rain has showered its arrows of silver upon me
Seeking my heart; winds have roared and tossed me;
Music in long blue waves of sound has borne me
A helpless weed to shores of unthought silence;
Time, above me, within me, crashed its gongs
Of terrible warning, sifting the dust of death;
And here I lie. Blow now your horns of glory
Harshly over my flesh, you trees, you waters!
You stars and suns, Canopus, Deneb, Rigel,
Let me, as I lie down, here in this dust,
Hear, far off, your whispered salutation!
Roar now above my decaying flesh, you winds,
Whirl out your earth-scents over this body, tell me
Of ferns and stagnant pools, wild roses, hillsides!
Anoint me, rain, let crash your silver arrows
On this hard flesh! I am the one who named you,
I lived in you, and now I die in you.
I your son, your daughter, treader of music,
Lie, broken, conquered. . . . Let me not fall in silence.

III

I, the restless one; the circler of circles;
Herdsman and roper of stars, who could not capture
The secret of self; I who was tyrant to weaklings,
Striker of children; destroyer of women; corrupter

Of innocent dreamers, and laugher at beauty; I,
Too easily brought to tears and weakness by music,
Baffled and broken by love, the helpless beholder
Of the war in my heart, of desire with desire, the struggle
Of hatred with love, terror with hunger; I
Who laughed without knowing the cause of my laughter, who grew
Without wishing to grow, a servant to my own body;
Loved without reason the laughter and flesh of a woman,
Enduring such torments to find her! I who at last
Grow weaker, struggle more feebly, relent in my purpose,
Choose for my triumph an easier end, look backward
At earlier conquests; or, caught in the web, cry out
In a sudden and empty despair, "Tetélestai!"
Pity me, now! I, who was arrogant, beg you!
Tell me, as I lie down, that I was courageous.
Blow horns of victory now, as I reel and am vanquished.
Shatter the sky with trumpets above my grave.

IV

. . . Look! this flesh how it crumbles to dust and is blown!
These bones, how they grind in the granite of frost and are nothing!
This skull, how it yawns for a flicker of time in the darkness,
Yet laughs not and sees not! It is crushed by a hammer of sunlight,
And the hands are destroyed. . . . Press down through the leaves of the jasmine,
Dig through the interlaced roots—nevermore will you find me;
I was no better than dust, yet you cannot replace me. . . .
Take the soft dust in your hand—does it stir: does it sing?
Has it lips and a heart? Does it open its eyes to the sun?
Does it run, does it dream, does it burn with a secret, or tremble
In terror of death? Or ache with tremendous decisions? . . .
Listen! . . . It says: "I lean by the river. The willows
Are yellowed with bud. White clouds roar up from the south
And darken the ripples; but they cannot darken my heart,
Nor the face like a star in my heart! . . . Rain falls on the water
And pelts it, and rings it with silver. The willow trees glisten,

The sparrow chirps under the eaves; but the face in my heart
Is a secret of music. . . . I wait in the rain and am silent."
Listen again! . . . It says: "I have worked, I am tired,
The pencil dulls in my hand; I see through the window
Walls upon walls of windows with faces behind them,
Smoke floating up to the sky, an ascension of sea-gulls.
I am tired. I have struggled in vain, my decision was fruitless,
Why then do I wait? with darkness, so easy, at hand! . . .
But tomorrow, perhaps. . . . I will wait and endure till tomorrow!" . . .
Or again: "It is dark. The decision is made. I am vanquished
By terror of life. The walls mount slowly about me
In coldness. I had not the courage. I was forsaken.
I cried out, was answered by silence . . . Tetélestai! . . ."

V

Hear how it babbles!—Blow the dust out of your hand,
With its voices and visions, tread on it, forget it, turn homeward
With dreams in your brain. . . . This, then, is the humble, the nameless,—
The lover, the husband and father, the struggler with shadows,
The one who went down under shoutings of chaos, the weakling
Who cried his "forsaken!" like Christ on the darkening hilltop! . . .
This, then, is the one who implores, as he dwindles to silence,
A fanfare of glory. . . . And which of us dares to deny him?

HERVEY ALLEN

Hervey Allen (William Hervey Allen, Jr.) was born December 8, 1889, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his early education in the city of his birth, attended the U. S. Naval Academy, but resigned before graduating; received his B.S. in Economics at Pittsburgh in 1915, and took special courses at Harvard 1921-1922. He saw military service as Second Lieutenant of Infantry on the Mexican border in 1916 and as First Lieutenant with the A.E.F. in France, where he was seriously wounded in August, 1918. Returning to America that year, he drifted South. From 1919 to 1924 he lived in Charleston, South Carolina, and while there wrote *Carolina Chansons* (1922) in collaboration with DuBose Heyward. With Heyward he founded The Poetry Society of South Carolina and assisted in awakening interest in poetry through the South.

Two volumes of Allen's had already appeared: *Wampum and Old Gold* (1921) and *The Bride of Huitzil* (1922), the most distinguished feature of the former being a war ballad, "The Blindman," an annual prize being offered in commemoration of this poem. Allen's *Earth Moods and Other Poems* (1925), is by far his most arresting presentation. This collection displays Allen as more than a local poet. The major part of the volume is devoted to long poems which attempt to express the evolutionary struggle from nebulous matter to man. The treatment is half epical, half legendary, and though as yet Allen's aim exceeds his grasp, there is a definiteness of execution in such poems as "The Saga of Lief the Lucky" and "Funeral at High Tide." The "other poems" are shorter and more compactly colored; "Gargantuana" and "Whim Alley" being particularly effective examples of Allen's ability to make decorations which do not suffer from picturesque affectations.

New Legends (1929) is the outcome of five years' research and immersion in the Bermuda islands. It is divided into three parts, the keenest being the sections entitled "Legends" and "Lines on the Imagination." At present Allen stands at the cross-roads: he has the possibilities of being either a lyricist or a writer of ambitious epics.

Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (1926) is a remarkable work of research and re-creation. These two volumes of faithful biography furnish an excellent complement to the psychoanalytical study of Poe by Joseph Wood Krutch.

WHIM ALLEY

Whim Alley once led into Danger Court
Loud with the raucous talk of cockatoos,
Where bearded Jews a-squat in alcove shops
Sat waiting like royal falcons in a mews.
Softly as rain the voweled Portuguese
Fell from their red-ripe lips with eastern news
Of galleons whose names were melodies—
Softly—between the shrieks of cockatoos.
Who cared for royal navigation laws
In Danger Court—for what the Soldan said—
Or papal lines between the east and west?

Abram out-Shylocked Isaac with applause,
And clutched the sweated doubloons to his chest,
Whose late lamented owners were scarce dead.
For there were smugglers' bargains to be made
Where leaping arches looped along the walls,
While sunlight smoldered down the long arcade
And dizened into flame on Spanish shawls,
And what the sequin brought in Louis d'or
Was news,—and rumors passed from Trebizond,
While Rachel clinked brass anklets in a door
With a straight glimpse of blue sea just beyond.
Dark sailors passed with tang of wine and tar,
And merchants with wide hats and wider fringes,
And two black Sambos smoked the same cigar
Upon a chest with three locks and five hinges.
Vanished in air! Those arches roof a cow,
To parrots' rings the frowsy hens resort;
Whim Alley leads to less than nothing now,
And only shadows dwell in Danger Court.

GARGANTUANA

Gargantuan ranges of blue-dappled hills
Roll down titanic coasts of cobalt shires,
While inland dreams a sunstruck city's ghost,
Streaked with the level scarfs from temple fires.
Down, down the hills a bull-voiced waterfall
Plunges from cloudy cliffs that climb so high,
It echoes like an organ from a hall
Of stairs that wind into the windy sky.
And there are monstrous footprints in the sand
That twist up rusty roadways red as snakes
Onto an upland paved with level floors
Of copper water stagnant in iron lakes.
And hooded peaks vault into clouded wonder
From whence the island's voice rolls out to sea,
Reverberating words of blatant thunder,
Dull as a demon's glee.
Its hills sequester meadows walled with fire,
On which like evil prayers the sphinxes lie,
With flame-like plumes that bloom upon their wings,

While red clouds wither by—
The roc has made his nest among the cliffs,
And in the evening from a mountain's dome,
Remote as thought, there blurs the sound of drums
That call the giants home.

JAMES WHALER

James Whaler was born May 5, 1889, in Wilmington, Delaware. His parents came from Maryland and Pennsylvania with no city backgrounds anywhere until the family reached Wilmington. Young Whaler attended the Wilmington Friends' School and graduated from Princeton University, from which he received a doctor's degree for a work on Miltonic simile. Paying hard for his education, he worked in many capacities until he became head of a Nature Study class at the Minnesota State Teachers' College and Instructor of English at Goucher College, Baltimore.

His first impulse to write poetry came when he found himself in the depths of Maine woods in 1922, but Whaler was thirty-eight before his first book, *Hale's Pond* (1927), was published. The volume attracted little notice; beyond two or three perfunctory reviews, there was no critical consideration of the six long narratives comprising this strange work. But though few copies of the book were sold, rumors of its quality seemed to spread by grapevine telegraph; here a surprised critic and there an unprofessional enthusiast spoke up for the coiled vigor of "Runaway," "Jordan," "Monsieur Pipereau." This was New England with a difference. Purporting to be the poetry of the Maine woods, it was the very antithesis of the *plein-air*-afoot-through-the-great-outdoors sort of verse to which the Wanderlust school had accustomed us. Instead of pedestrian platitudes, here were ideas as novel as their idiom; instead of dilutions of sentiment, here were emotional and verbal richness.

This luxuriance, at first commendable, is Whaler's chief handicap for it leads him to pile figure upon figure, pack word against word until his line becomes congested. So, too, his utterance, strained to its emotional capacity, tends to be pitched an octave too high. But Whaler might well be calling attention to a kind of Yankee we have forgotten. Understatement is characteristic of one type of New Englander; there is another—and as genuine a type—who, when he speaks, speaks too loudly with the abrupt release of long suppressions. The very knots and congestions, as well as the intense key of Whaler's verse, result from an endeavor to express the person who, when he talks, cries out his thought and who, when a poet, is likely to forget restraint. Whaler's faults are the faults of excess, not those of insufficiency, and, though here and there he shows the danger of knowing the woods too well, his men and women come first. He can—and does—draw the fine line between the incidental and the inevitable.

In varying degrees, all the long poems exhibit this power to seize on the significant-trivial, none better than "Monsieur Pipereau." In some ways this poem is the author's chief triumph, for here, without preamble or apology, Whaler calmly rewrites one of the world's most popular poems. "Monsieur Pipereau" is, plot for plot, detail for detail, Browning's "Pied Piper of Hamelin" translated to a lumber-camp in Maine. But instead of being overcome by the comparison, the reader forgets the American's audacity, even—after the first page or two—forgets the original. All he recognizes, all he remembers is the opulence and vitality of narration, the easy naturalizing of the supernatural.

"Runaway" and "Jordan" are no less remarkable. Though the former has moments of confused mysticism, the descriptions are keen, the concentrations are always surprising and accurate. This is a verse familiar in scene yet strange in spite of the homely speech. Following Wordsworth's pronouncement, it reaffirms the contention that poetry can talk as well as sing.

THE POND

(*From "Runaway"*)

Shadowed in midnight green,
Wedging her belly down a wide ravine,
Pinned by birch-silver to a bed of umber,
Her splay-claws lax, vibrating with her slumber,
No moon to bathe her eyes
And wake her, warn her that a storm would rise,—
Hale's Pond I felt before me in an hour
By thick black scents of fish and fern and flower.
I rested on the "Dock"—
Two split logs slapping at a foundered rock
Where lichen-paint dripped into lily-wire;
Here often had I dived through June's wet fire,
Here often had I crawled a chill ooze-bed,
With frog-palms, trout-eyes, chest ribbed round with lead.

For Father, when he had a cider-bout,
And in the shame of it, would send me out

To weed—then dive instead, and shout and swim
Till sun-slope and the black cows' milking-hymn!
Was I not muskrat, water-snake, raccoon?
Was I not dragon-fly and diving loon?
Polliwog, dreaming under lily-pads?
Victor of song in frog-olympiads?
Crawfish investigating runes of stone?
Minnow of sucking glass and glassy bone?
I flamed a water-beetle's fat vermilion,
I joined the water-striders' cool cotillion;
I made my body calamus for thin
Silk fish to nibble at me, toe to chin;
And once, while I was floating like a mink,
Straight in my face a doe looked down to drink!
I saw my soul burn in her golden eyes,
Globed among ecstasies!
I caught her breath above a pickerel-bloom:
It was black plum and russet-mild mushroom.
But best of all, eyes fish-wide, six feet under,
Breasting the veil between two worlds asunder,
I measured measureless
And moving calm, fin-naked gentleness
Of sunlight, and I heard an ocean boom
Afar, and my soul's treasure disentomb.

MONSIEUR PIPEREAU

The worst camp-life man ever lived? That season
Up near Seboomook. Couldn't been worse. The reason?
Rats! Big enough rats to circumcise wildcats,
Sociable, devastating democrats,
Under the bunkhouse, up above the ceiling,
Under the cook-room, and forever squealing
Under the stables, through the manger-racks,
Round every bale of hay in herds and packs,
Under manure-piles, sawdust, shingles, sacks,
Kegs, harness, grease-pots, axle-trees, ropes, jacks,
Under our blankets, under our very backs,
Until that whole camp looked like maniacs!
For days big Simmons couldn't stoop his head:
Rats bit him in the neck one night in bed.

Nadeau got out his rosary and prayed
Currying his horses, he was so afraid;
And once I even saw him make his mare
Kneel down beside him in the straw for prayer.
Rogers, the foreman, had them send us traps
From Bangor: cages with invisible snaps
And flaps to hold a dozen, traps of steel
Whose center-plates would crash at a grasshopper's heel:
Flat-traps of maple, circle-traps of wire,
Traps built to serve mankind and to inspire,—
We had a hundred and seven traps all told;
And every brand of poison-mixture sold.
Ever study rats?—You'll take them by surprise
Once—no! not even once! No trap, how wise
Or simple, fools a rat in his right mind!
First day, caught ten—the deaf and dumb and blind;
And the first night six more—the sick and lean;
And next day none—making in all sixteen.
"Five cents per head!" Rogers announced that night.
Vainly imagining we could strike the light
Of inspiration, were there bounty to it,—
Lord! we'd have paid him ten per head to do it!
One way was left: rifles with powder and lead:
Shooting them from the rafters overhead
By lantern-glow; but almost all objected—
Preferring rats to one shot misdirected;
And when a bullet killed a laying-fowl
Of Mrs. Grove's, our cook, we heard a howl
That went into the food she fed us. RATS!
As it grew cold they took to shoes and hats.
I woke one morning minus watch and vest:
Some rat's idea to improve his nest.

Now Rogers and his wife, and Mrs. Grove
Her sister, had a cabin—with its drove
Of rats—all separate from ours. One night
We brought him final word we'd lost the fight,
Would have to quit, and asked to draw our pay.
But Rogers said: "Boys, hold it one more day!
I share this hell you're in that's worse than war.
We got 'em bad here too—just one day more!

Haven't talked much, but I've a large surprise
For this whole camp tomorrow. Shine your eyes
To see dead rats tomorrow—dead ones!—do y'hear?
Listen to what our Super writes: 'Monsieur
Bernard de Pipereau from Canada,
Expert in shrews, rats, mice, et cetera,
Will reach Seboomook Thursday. As to fee,
No more than forty for his guarantee.
Tom Rogers, hold the men! Write, let us know.'
Well, what are you grinning at? This Pipereau
Is known in Brunswick.—Men, we are in luck!
That's right, stay on one day, and if the ruck
Of these eternal vermin ain't in hell
By Saturday, then, by God! I'll pull the bell
To quit! But if that Canadian's what I say,
Then holiday
On me at Joe's, and pay goes on the same!"
Even while he argued, up the window-frame
Inside—behind him—slouched a long slick rat.
Big Simmons nearly cried. "We don't want that,"
Said nervous Nadeau. "Ain't we had enough
Holidays every night? It's another bluff!"
Yet Rogers spoke so meek and fair and certain
You never had found the devil himself deserting.
"Of course you doubt me, boys, but that's not odd—
Doubt—honest doubt's the noblest work of God!"
"Yes, but a rat ain't!" wheezed old Shorty Myer,
Who set all laughing, as we slipped back sprier,
To dream in ratland one more day and night.

Next noon, accoutered as a wizard might
From Lapland if a parliament of witches
Should send to Maine for a heap of flesh and riches,
The doctor came that Rogers promised—just
Floated to camp through arches of snow-dust,
And, galloping to messhouse, on a long
Stallion that snorted an Icelandic song,
He reined up in the center of a ring
Of men. We hailed him as our saviour-king.
But not till Tom came running with a grin,
Would he slide from the saddle and go in,

Leaving his horse in a long muzzle of steam
Snapping a drift with vicious teeth of cream.
Rogers came round and introduced.
"The boys—
Be pleased to meet the boys."
"Ah! rat annoys
Such beeg, beeg men! I show you how you kill."
We sat down on the dinner-benches, still
Sizing the stranger up, some not through eating;
And other men came in, looked, passed no greeting,
For something strange was in the air: the oak
Logs on the hearth seemed damp and turned to smoke.

"The devil for looks!" said Shorty Myer low,
"He'd give a porcupine the vertigo!"
Nose long and thin, and eyes that never saw
The thing outside without its inside flaw.
Hair long and thin, ears long, cheeks thin and taper,
With the complexion of last year's newspaper;
Long thin mustaches and some spears of thin
Long bristles reddish-gray from a long chin.
That Frenchman's eyes wheeled round and hypnotized us:
Oh, there's no miracle would have surprised us
More than the thing he did! He sent a bench
Of men to the other end; and, like the French,
Talked with his elbows till he cleared a corner;
Then squats before us like a dying mourner,
And, with long hands as stiff as cant-dog hooks,
He pulls a board away, and looks and looks
At two small rat-holes, motioning us be still:
I tell you not a body moved a gill.
Even Mrs. Grove held up her pan of beans
Steaming, but felt no heat or weight.—Such scenes
We think we dream in.—*Wee, wee-wee, hsts-hsts,*
Hsts-hsts, wee-wee! and, like ventriloquists,
He whistled so that cries were overhead,
Were underfoot, came from a box of bread.
Now feet were heard to patter under bench
And table; and the men began to blench.
He made a sound like tuning-forks from June
Mosquitoes, till that winter afternoon

Turned for the moment green, the snow was gone,
And birds began to whistle through the dawn.
We saw no longer human lips and teeth
On him who charmed those vermin underneath:
The motion of the music in his face
Made all his body tremble, and displace
The human by a beast—or worse than that:
The men close by him shrunk away,—a RAT!
And then he threw his brown coat round him like
A tent; his lightning-fingers gave a strike,
A shake, and, with a little laugh of French,
He tossed a dead rat to an empty bench.
The stable-kid began to cry hurrah,
But Pipereau turned black, and waved his claw,—
Seemed to congeal poor Joey's underjaw.
But Mrs. Grove, the pan pressed to her heart,
Murmured to Mrs. Rogers: "Ain't he smart!"
Close by the other hole once more he drew;
Whistling, he spread his coat for number two,
Flipped him to death with two invisible pinches,
And tossed him to Rogers,—a beast of eighteen inches
From tooth to tail-tip—longer than the first:
Tom Rogers grabbed the tails of both and cursed,
And pitched them to the fireplace nose in,
To test if they were real or he was dozing.

The Frenchman stood full height and said, "Plentee!
You have plentee and clevair rats—oui, oui!"
Then Rogers asked his terms. Quarter per head—
These first two free. Or, one gross sum instead,
And we'd be cured of rats in a day and night.
"One hundred dollars and I do it right!"
The price turned Rogers pale. "That is a great
Pile in this country, friend. It's not the rate
Named in this letter from my Company!—
No more than forty for his guarantee."
"*Cor*rect! One hundred is ze lowest price
To kill or drife away all rats and mice;
But forty more—I *guarantee* you, men:
Zey leafe to *leafe,* and never come again!"

Tom whispered with his wife. . . . "That's reasonable,
Doctor," he said. "There's not an obstacle
To hinder here: we'll follow all you say
If you can rid our camp in a night and day."

. . . . . .

John Heald came hobbling from the cook-house. "Yep!
Rats have resigned! All night he made 'em step!"

"Ah, ah! Ze good time wiz ze boys?" Outside
Tom's cabin Pipereau left his horse untied.
Then as they talked within we boys leaned to.
"How, doctor, can you *prove* your job is through?
Suppose when you're gone tonight we find rats still?—
We've lost one hundred forty! What *proof* will
We ask? This: we take twenty buttered rolls,
And with them plug up twenty cook-room holes;
Take twenty squares of cheese, and lay a square
On every mess-room bench and table and chair.
The air's not cold outside—all hands can wait
Till seven o'clock. Then we'll inspect the bait."
"Eh bien! Oui, oui!"

At once the thing was done.
The Frenchman, bundled like a skeleton,
Wove round and round the camp a savage, quick
Canter that showed his horse knew every trick.
For two sharp hours he rode, while Rogers walked
Among his men around a fire and talked.
The moon was near the full, the woods were deep
With ghostly lights like any sick man's sleep.
John Heald, on crutches, shook his beard in two
Telling us what he saw that Frenchman do
When he looked through a keyhole. "Had a pipe,"
He said, "thin as the leg-bone of a snipe—
And on that pipe he trilled in graveyard pitch
The damnedest tunes! They would have laid a witch!
These tunes I *saw!* Brown smoke! which snaked its way
Down every chink and hole where rats can stay!
God help what falls into that Frenchman's clutches!
You think I dreamt, Tom! Never! Took up crutches
At twelve o'clock, and hobbled toward the barn,
Where, through a hole, what did I see, by darn!

But that horse eating in the moonlight there
Live rats as if it was a regular fare!
Live rats! I tell you not a one was dead
Until that stallion grabbed it by its head!
That pipe's peculiar music has such force
It sends those rats all racing for the horse,
Greedy to gaze into that horse's eye!
I saw them coming one by one—to die!
Endless processions—two and sometimes three
Rat-giants at once would stand up patiently
Waiting to catch that horse's eye! And they
Would mew like kittens playing in the hay.
Once Pipereau came in—I am no liar!—
And Tom, those two rats you threw in the fire?
He brought 'em alive and well, to feed that horse!
It must have been the brute's five-hundredth course!
And then that Frenchman drew a rat-skin bag
Out of the saddle somewhere: such a swag!
Oh, such a swag! Gold coins and ruby globes!
Diamonds of folded fires like folded robes!
And little images of glowworm light—
I left off looking, I shook so for fright:
I'd only strength to make my bunk-room, lock
The door, and listen for the crowing cock.
I don't see how those women dared to serve
Meals to that rat!—They beat us men for nerve!
Oh, I forgot to tell about some stuff
I saw him take—" But Rogers cried, "Enough!
An interesting dream, John, that will keep!
See here, it's seven! It's business now, not sleep!"

And Pipereau was waiting with a yawn,
And a laughing wink that all our rats were gone.
He held the pail to pick up rolls and cheese
While Tom preceded, swinging lantern and keys.
Back they came arguing.
                                        "I tell you flat,
Doctor, you haven't killed us *every* rat!
You saw me lay the bait—but here's nineteen,
No more than nineteen rolls! And you saw clean

White squares of cheese I cut: but these lack three
Of making twenty! And the rest, you see,
Are all gnawed through! And at my very door
An apple's gone that you saw there before!
By contract, must I pay you anything
At all?—Here, take this forty, covering
All rats you killed and all you might have killed
Had you but had more time—or been more skilled."
The Frenchman clenched the bills and ground his teeth,
Jabbering a lightning lingo underneath
His chest, that shivered in the furs he wore;
And from the *dieu's* he brew I guessed he swore.
He leaped so quick upon the stallion that
We jumped, imagining a bloody rat!
He leaped so arrowy we thought he strode
The great moon that had risen from the road;
And the free stallion, treading clouds of snow,
Cut sharp that moon into a cameo,
While all was silent but our hearts, that shook.
Tom cried, "I'm through forever with that crook!"
We ate in silence.

Never was there bliss
Like ours that night! Oh, never night like this
In Rogers' camp! Dreamless and oathless—ratless!
No one to wake and find a wardrobe hatless,
Bootless or shoeless! Night so overpowering
Peaceful I woke while yet the moon was towering.
There lay the men like innocents new-born,
Some barely breathing, others blowing horn
Or bowing violins of wood and silk.
Not since these men had quit their mothers' milk
Was such content. I lit a pipe to think,
And walked out to the shed to get a drink,
When in the moonlight I could see Nadeau
Standing outside the doorway in the snow.
"Just like a nursery, ain't it!"
"God, it's that!
But didn't you hear some time ago a cat?"
"It's just from listening to John Heald's words

Last night, Nadeau; but John dreams dreams—and lies.
The plague is over! Frenchy takes the prize!
He's galloped to the moon with all his rats!"
We both turned in and slept like autocrats.

Of all days for calamity—Sunday! Black
Sunday it was in Rogers' almanac!
We boys awoke that morning with a shout
Of bliss: the rats were banished without doubt!—
Each of us glowing like a god of Rome,
Or like the wandering boy that's welcomed home.
Thermometer ten above,—just comfortable
To renovate our camp from stove to stall.
Now business first on Sundays was to shave
Or bathe, or both—but to do both was brave;
Yet every man this morning called for tub
And water, till we looked a swimming-club.
What if a wind had crossed the rising sun,
And flakes as round as quarters had begun
To quilt the roofs with whiter wool?—I say
Paradise gave up its morning to our day.

Well, I was raking off my beard for fair
At McIlvenny's mirror, and the air
Was being lit with hymns from twenty faces,
Nadeau's fine tenor up above the basses
In his pet lullaby, "Fair Infidel,"
And all were starving for the breakfast-bell,—
When on a sudden every note went flat!
I dropped my razor, nervous as a cat.
Some one was hollering in Rogers' house!
We opened doors to hear him.
"Cook's heraus!"
Called Al Lemure. Then Rogers burst in—hat
And coat off, bald head blue with cold. "That rat!
That French rat, boys!"
Well, late that night before,
His wife and Mrs. Grove unlocked their door,
All clad for travel—furs and gloves and hoods,—
Ran from the moonlight into the deep woods,
And up behind that Frenchman on that horse
They were now flying.—"God knows what their course!

Though you could still see footprints where they ran,
This new snow covers up that Frenchman's plan!
It's Pipereau's witchcraft—that rat Pipereau!—
And eight hours' start in all this world of snow!"

"Boys!" cried big Simmons, "is there road or trail,
Mountain or pond or stream or swamp or swale
Round here but we know better 'n a love-letter?
Wherever Tom's wife is I say we get her!"
"And bring the cook back too!" cried Al Lemure.

Well, up and down and round Moosehead we sure
Did spread the tidings of that Pipereau.
Some went to Greenville, Rogers through the snow
Drove clear to Foxcroft, and till Wednesday night,
As we'd agreed, we trailed that Frenchman's flight.
Whatever were the footprints, all led south,
Or we'd have mushed it to the St. Lawrence mouth.
Tom tried the law; but lawyers urged, of course,
One hundred dollars for a quick divorce.
Oh, Maine is broad, but Canada is broader:
That Frenchman, once he loped across the border,
Could have set sail to Lapland with his riches,
Or galloped there between a brace of witches.
Neither his wife nor cook Tom saw again,
Nor Pipereau, though trailed by many men.

Hear to the end: there's still a funeral;
For when Tom lost his wife, that was not all.
By Wednesday night we were too fagged to pull
Boots from our feet or speak a syllable.
Staggered and haggard like a wreck of drunks,
We fell, with no undressing, on our bunks,
Wind-broken dogs from shoeing through that snow—
And neither Frenchman, wife, nor cook to show.
And yet one comfort mightily surpassed
Our toil: we had a ratless camp at last!—
Oh, think of coming home to sleep, sleep, sleep
Without one prayer to God our souls to keep!
With such a hope one man can fight like ten;
Eagles can harbor in the heart of a wren.

Pure slumber to the muscles of my hair,
I fell to dreaming I had shot a bear,
When a volcano's voice shook through my bed:
"Rats! Rats! Rats! Rats!—They're back!—They're near my head"!
The moon burnt frosty through the panes of glass,
Annealing rafters to a milky brass,
Daubed everywhere with shadows big as cats—
RATS!
Tremendous teams and troupes of acrobats,
Chewing on harness and on leather puttees,
On snow-shoe straps as if it were on cheese.
I saw their eyes like little jeweled moons
Arching from rope to rope in glad festoons.
And under-floor I heard the pattering pests,—
The old full families squealing in their nests,
Wherever ear could listen there was gnawing
And clawing and pawing and chawing and wild seesawing.
A trunk that held my only Sunday suit
Was being investigated by one brute;
Two more I watched climb out of Mac's new shoes;
Nowhere in sight but they were working in twos
Where there'd been one before that Frenchman came.
Mac, with his gun out now, was taking aim.
"You'll wake up Rogers, Mac; don't waste your shell!"
Flump! The anatomies of dead rats fell
Over a dozen bunks—and then the room was hell!
The rats took cover while the lead kept flying;—
No use if Rogers had come pacifying;
The boys let powder loose at every hole
And shadow where they saw that Frenchman's soul.
At length ten minutes' peace, then hordes on hordes
Came swarming back to the same beams and boards.
We shot the roof into a sieve for snow
To cover up the flesh of rats below;
We shook that roof into a storm of flakes
Which melted on the bunks in crimson lakes.
A blizzard underneath the moon was that!
A battlefield of wild-man versus rat!
And all that night Tom Rogers staid away,
But we'd hear bullets fired and ricochet

Inside his cabin, and we wished him well:
We knew his heaven, like ours, had turned to hell.

If, near Seboomook, on a rise of loose
Green bowlders and a single stand of spruce
And pine, you stumble on a ruined camp,
Find bits of bone around a broken lamp,
And shingles made of little holes,—begone!
Unless you are a wizard or a faun,
Oh, crave no harbor here for any night!
For in one hour of the fall of light
You will see life that Pharaoh did not see,
You will arise and shake—and you will flee
To cast your couch with dews and moss and rocks,
Lonelier than a woodrat, lonelier than a fox.

CLAUDE McKAY

Claude McKay was born in Jamaica, West Indies, in 1889. He had, as he says, "no education" except what instruction he received from his brother. For a while he was in the service of the Kingston Constabulary. He came to the United States in 1912 and was a student of agriculture at the Kansas State College. After leaving school McKay tried to earn his living with varying success on Pullman cars, in kitchens, as a menial in hotels. Meanwhile, he had been writing, and some of his more belligerent verse had attracted the attention of a few literary radicals. In 1920 he became connected with *The Liberator* and, shortly thereafter, was made associate editor.

Songs of Jamaica, his first immature volume, was published while McKay was still in Jamaica; his second and more characteristic *Spring in New Hampshire* was published by Grant Richards in London in 1920. The best of both volumes with many more recent poems appear in *Harlem Shadows* (1922), with an introduction by Max Eastman. Here the pure-blooded Negro speaks with a boldness in curious contrast to the sentimental dialect verse which used to be affected by most of his race. His melodies are instinctive, the naked force of his invectives is deep.

Home to Harlem (1928) and *Banjo* (1929), subtitled "A Story Without a Plot," are novels in which realism and impressionism project vivid character studies against foreign and native backgrounds.

IF WE MUST DIE

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Oh, kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but—fighting back!

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Christopher (Darlington) Morley was born at Haverford, Pennsylvania, May 5, 1890. He graduated from Haverford College in 1910 and was Rhodes Scholar at New College, Oxford, England, 1910-13.

Since 1914 he has been on the staff of various periodicals, coming to New York in 1920 to run his column ("The Bowling Green") on the New York *Evening Post*, subsequently joining the staff of *The Saturday Review of Literature*. In 1927, he and Cleon Throckmorton took over two old theaters in Hoboken, reviving the successes of previous decades and establishing the last sea-coast of New York's literary Bohemia.

Morley is the author of more than thirty dissimilar volumes of essays, skits, gossip, travel-notes, light verse and serious poetry. His most distinguished volume, *Where the Blue Begins* (1922), is a prose fantasy which is both excellent nonsense and dexterous satire. *Thunder on the Left* (1925) strikes deeper if less unusual chords.

As a writer of serious poetry, Morley has less to say. *The Rocking Horse* (1919), *Hide and Seek* (1920) and *Chimneysmoke* (1922) sink too often in their own sentiments; their sweetness is frequently cloying, their charm too conscious. But Morley's vigor energizes his lines and prevents many of his verses—especially those in the latter volume—from becoming tawdry, while his technique saves them from the fatuity of their own subjects.

QUICKENING

Such little, puny things are words in rhyme:
Poor feeble loops and strokes as frail as hairs;
You see them printed here, and mark their chime,
And turn to your more durable affairs.
Yet on such petty tools the poet dares
To run his race with mortar, bricks and lime,
And draws his frail stick to the point, and stares
To aim his arrow at the heart of Time.

Intangible, yet pressing, hemming in,
This measured emptiness engulfs us all,
And yet he points his paper javelin
And sees it eddy, waver, turn, and fall,
And feels, between delight and trouble torn,
The stirring of a sonnet still unborn.

TO A POST-OFFICE INKWELL

How many humble hearts have dipped
In you, and scrawled their manuscript!
Have shared their secrets, told their cares,
Their curious and quaint affairs!

Your pool of ink, your scratchy pen,
Have moved the lives of unborn men,
And watched young people, breathing hard,
Put Heaven on a postal card.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Edna St. Vincent Millay was born February 22, 1892, in Rockland, Maine. After a childhood spent in her native State, she attended Vassar College, from which she was graduated in 1917. Coming to New York, she supported herself by writing short stories under various pseudonyms (*Distressing Dialogues*, 1924, being published under the name of "Nancy Boyd"), translating songs, acting with the Provincetown Players in the capacity of playwright and performer. After her marriage to Eugene Boissevain, she moved to a farm in the Berkshires which she leaves only to deliver occasional readings.

Her first long poem, "Renascence," was the outstanding feature of *The Lyric Year* (1912), an anthology which revealed many new names. "Renascence" was written when Miss Millay was scarcely nineteen; it remains one of the most remarkable poems of this generation. Beginning like a casual aimless rhyme, it proceeds, with calm lucidity, to an amazing climax. It is as if a child had, in the midst of ingenuousness, uttered some terrific truth. The cumulative power of this poem is surpassed only by its passages of individual beauty.

Renascence, Miss Millay's first volume, was published in 1917. It sounds, at intervals, the same passion as its title poem; here is a hunger for beauty so intense that no delight can appease it. Such poems as "God's World" and a few of the unnamed sonnets, capturing the breathless awe of "Renascence" in a smaller compass, vibrate with similar rapture.

A Few Figs From Thistles (originally published in 1920 and revised several times since then), although one of Miss Millay's most popular collections, is her least commendable performance. In many of these self-conscious flippancies, Miss Millay has exchanged her poetic birthright for a mess of cleverness. There are a few poems which are worthy of her calling, but the greater part of this volume smirks with a facile sophistication, admiring its own pertly cynical pirouettes.

Second April (1921) is a return to the triumph of her first book. In spite of certain lapses in which the poet seems to have adopted a fixed simper, *Second April* expresses that passion for identification with all of life which few poets in her generation have surpassed; she has made ecstasy articulate and almost tangible. A new note, new at least for this singer, creeps into the lyrics, the note of gravity; here is dignity, almost an austerity, of emotion. In her inversions and archaic epithets, her "forsooths" and "alacks," Miss Millay seems to be a belated Elizabethan; she uses locutions which ordinarily have a false and affected ring. Far from marring her work, these antique accents suit the light banter of "The Bean-Stalk," as well as the intensity of "The Poet and His Book," and the unforgettable "Elegy."

Three plays were published in 1921: *Two Slatterns and a King*, "a moral interlude" in adroit couplets, *The Lamp and the Bell*, a five-act drama which is a strange composite of native speech and Shakespearean echoes, and *Aria Da Capo*, a one-act play which, for all its brevity, is a profound satire on war and war-makers.

The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems (1924) wears its author's heart on its sleeve; often, in fact, that responsive organ is displayed as a shining bauble, a decoration tricked with frayed ribbons. But here Miss Millay begins to wear her heart with a difference. Rarely now is she narcissistic or consciously arch; she speaks with a disillusion that contains more than a tinge of bitterness. Love, she announces, sometimes with a wry wistfulness, sometimes with a proud scorn, is not enough. If, she tells us, it is hard never to attain one's desires, it is even more painful to have them fulfilled. This change of key makes *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems* Miss Millay's most uneven collection. The title-poem, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1922, barely saves itself from sentimentality; the irritating coyness of "The Return from Town" is offset by the lyric stab of "Autumn Chant." But the twenty-two sonnets which comprise Part Four of this book are not only representative of Miss Millay's best, but are among the finest modern examples of the form.

In spite of ill-health, Miss Millay devoted the summer of 1926 to a work which had been contracted for. In Santa Fé, she completed *The King's Henchman,* the libretto of an opera composed by Deems Taylor, which was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House early in 1927. Occasional poems had appeared in magazines, betraying the fact that though her verse was still quick with homely facts of people and seasons, the gay impudence was no longer there; that she loved what she loved now not with variability nor desperation but with nostalgia. *The Buck in the Snow and Other Poems* (1928) is pitched in the key of loss. The heel-and-toe insouciance has disappeared; a new and more somber poet emerges from these pages. The happy vibrations of her early work have lengthened to a music that no longer celebrates eager dawn or headlong day but is tuned to the beginning of evening. Never has Miss Millay plucked so insistently on the autumnal string; never has she been so preoccupied with the water darkening, with the ceaseless "action of waves and the action of sorrow," with the lonely self, and the going down of "the sun that will not rise again." This is not to imply that the poet has become detached; Miss Millay's ecstasies are never abstract in the essential way that those of Léonie Adams are. Her metaphysics of passion remain personal; she is still too much in love with lost love, with the shards of her broken pot, with the memory of a world forgotten, with the spirit of persecution, the trodden grape, and the minutiae of unrelinquishing mortal mind. The mood is rarely anything but subjective and self-perturbed. Even so general a poem on death as "Morituris" proceeds from an undignified fear, a "shrieking to the south and clutching at the north."

Exception, however, must be made in the case of a small part of the volume, especially the group which brings the book to its ascending close. The seven sonnets in *The Buck in the Snow* overcome the limitations of the poet as well as the limitations of the form. In "Sonnet to Gath" she has fashioned an irony far removed from impertinence; in "On Hearing a Symphony of Beethoven" she achieves the impossible, writing that rarest of things, a successful poem on a symphony, and holding, in fourteen lines, the music, the orchestra, the audience, and the triumphant catharsis which is Beethoven. Rising above its almost fatal first line, it turns inversions and generalities into a victory over rhetoric.

It is such authority of idea and utterance that makes one forget Miss Millay's too easily manipulated verse-making. It is the realization of a spirit beyond word-shaping that puts permanence into the best of her measures. At its height, her poetry reflects the paradox of its being: it is immediate and it is immutable.

RENASCENCE[1]

All I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood;
I turned and looked another way,
And saw three islands in a bay.
So with my eyes I traced the line
Of the horizon, thin and fine,
Straight around till I was come
Back to where I'd started from;
And all I saw from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood.
Over these things I could not see;
These were the things that bounded me;
And I could touch them with my hand,
Almost, I thought, from where I stand.
And all at once things seemed so small
My breath came short, and scarce at all.
But, sure, the sky is big, I said;
Miles and miles above my head;
So here upon my back I'll lie
And look my fill into the sky.
And so I looked, and, after all,
The sky was not so very tall.

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[1] The poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay are published by Harper & Brothers, and copyright by Edna St. Vincent Millay as acknowledged in the Foreword.

The sky, I said, must somewhere stop,
And—sure enough!—I see the top!
The sky, I thought, is not so grand;
I 'most could touch it with my hand!
And, reaching up my hand to try,
I screamed to feel it touch the sky.

I screamed, and—lo!—Infinity
Came down and settled over me;
Forced back my scream into my chest,
Bent back my arm upon my breast,
And, pressing of the Undefined
The definition on my mind,
Held up before my eyes a glass
Through which my shrinking sight did pass
Until it seemed I must behold
Immensity made manifold;
Whispered to me a word whose sound
Deafened the air for worlds around,
And brought unmuffled to my ears
The gossiping of friendly spheres,
The creaking of the tented sky,
The ticking of Eternity.

I saw and heard, and knew at last
The How and Why of all things, past,
And present, and forevermore.
The universe, cleft to the core,
Lay open to my probing sense
That, sickening, I would fain pluck thence
But could not,—nay! But needs must suck
At the great wound, and could not pluck
My lips away till I had drawn
All venom out.—Ah, fearful pawn!
For my omniscience I paid toll
In infinite remorse of soul.
All sin was of my sinning, all
Atoning mine, and mine the gall
Of all regret. Mine was the weight
Of every brooded wrong, the hate
That stood behind each envious thrust,
Mine every greed, mine every lust.
And all the while for every grief,

Each suffering, I craved relief
With individual desire,—
Craved all in vain! And felt fierce fire
About a thousand people crawl;
Perished with each,—then mourned for all!
A man was starving in Capri;
He moved his eyes and looked at me;
I felt his gaze, I heard his moan,
And knew his hunger as my own.
I saw at sea a great fog-bank
Between two ships that struck and sank;
A thousand screams the heavens smote;
And every scream tore through my throat;
No hurt I did not feel, no death
That was not mine; mine each last breath
That, crying, met an answering cry
From the compassion that was I.
All suffering mine, and mine its rod;
Mine, pity like the pity of God.
Ah, awful weight! Infinity
Pressed down upon the finite me!
My anguished spirit, like a bird,
Beating against my lips I heard;
Yet lay the weight so close about
There was no room for it without.
And so beneath the weight lay I
And suffered death, but could not die.

Long had I lain thus, craving death,
When quietly the earth beneath
Gave way, and inch by inch, so great
At last had grown the crushing weight,
Into the earth I sank till I
Full six feet under ground did lie,
And sank no more,—there is no weight
Can follow here, however great.
From off my breast I felt it roll,
And as it went my tortured soul
Burst forth and fled in such a gust
That all about me swirled the dust.
Deep in the earth I rested now;
Cool is its hand upon the brow

And soft its breast beneath the head
Of one who is so gladly dead.
And all at once, and over all,
The pitying rain began to fall.
I lay and heard each pattering hoof
Upon my lowly, thatchèd roof.
And seemed to love the sound far more
Than ever I had done before.
For rain it hath a friendly sound
To one who's six feet underground;
And scarce the friendly voice or face:
A grave is such a quiet place.

The rain, I said, is kind to come
And speak to me in my new home.
I would I were alive again
To kiss the fingers of the rain,
To drink into my eyes the shine
Of every slanting silver line,
To catch the freshened, fragrant breeze
From drenched and dripping apple-trees.
For soon the shower will be done,
And then the broad face of the sun
Will laugh above the rain-soaked earth
Until the world with answering mirth
Shakes joyously, and each round drop
Rolls, twinkling, from its grass-blade top.
How can I bear it; buried here,
While overhead the sky grows clear
And blue again after the storm?
O, multi-colored, multiform,
Beloved beauty over me,
That I shall never, never see
Again! Spring-silver, autumn-gold,
That I shall never more behold!
Sleeping your myriad magics through,
Close-sepulchered away from you!
O God, I cried, give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!
Upset each cloud's gigantic gourd
And let the heavy rain, down-poured

In one big torrent, set me free,
Washing my grave away from me!

I ceased; and, through the breathless hush
That answered me, the far-off rush
Of herald wings came whispering
Like music down the vibrant string
Of my ascending prayer, and—crash!
Before the wild wind's whistling lash
The startled storm-clouds reared on high
And plunged in terror down the sky,
And the big rain in one black wave
Fell from the sky and struck my grave.

I know not how such things can be,
I only know there came to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy living things;
A sound as of some joyous elf
Singing sweet songs to please himself,
And, through and over everything,
A sense of glad awakening.
The grass, a tip-toe at my ear,
Whispering to me I could hear;
I felt the rain's cool finger-tips
Brushed tenderly across my lips,
Laid gently on my sealèd sight,
And all at once the heavy night
Fell from my eyes and I could see,—
A drenched and dripping apple-tree,
A last long line of silver rain,
A sky grown clear and blue again.
And as I looked a quickening gust
Of wind blew up to me and thrust
Into my face a miracle
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell,—
I know not how such things can be!—
I breathed my soul back into me.

Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry

As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead and lives again.
About the trees my arms I wound;
Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;
I raised my quivering arms on high;
I laughed and laughed into the sky,
Till at my throat a strangling sob
Caught fiercely, and a great heart-throb
Sent instant tears into my eyes;
O God, I cried, no dark disguise
Can e'er hereafter hide from me
Thy radiant identity!
Thou canst not move across the grass
But my quick eyes will see Thee pass,
Nor speak, however silently,
But my hushed voice will answer Thee.
I know the path that tells Thy way
Through the cool eve of every day;
God, I can push the grass apart
And lay my finger on Thy heart!

The world stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the world is stretched the sky,—
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can push the sea and land
Farther away on either hand;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.
But East and West will pinch the heart
That cannot keep them pushed apart;
And he whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by.

THE PEAR TREE

In this squalid, dirty dooryard,
   Where the chickens scratch and run,
White, incredible, the pear tree
   Stands apart and takes the sun,

Mindful of the eyes upon it,
Vain of its new holiness,
Like the waste-man's little daughter
In her first communion dress.

GOD'S WORLD

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!
Thy mists that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with color! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
But never knew I this;
Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.
My soul is all but out of me,—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

WILD SWANS

I looked in my heart while the wild swans went over;—
And what did I see I had not seen before?
Only a question less or a question more;
Nothing to match the flight of wild birds flying.
Tiresome heart, forever living and dying!
House without air! I leave you and lock your door!
Wild swans, come over the town, come over
The town again, trailing your legs and crying!

THE POET AND HIS BOOK

Down, you mongrel, Death!
Back into your kennel!
I have stolen breath
In a stalk of fennel!

You shall scratch and you shall whine
Many a night, and you shall worry
Many a bone, before you bury
One sweet bone of mine!

When shall I be dead?
When my flesh is withered,
And above my head
Yellow pollen gathered
All the empty afternoon?
When sweet lovers pause and wonder
Who am I that lie thereunder,
Hidden from the moon?

This my personal death?—
That my lungs be failing
To inhale the breath
Others are exhaling?
This my subtle spirit's end?—
Ah, when the thawed winter splashes
Over these chance dust and ashes,
Weep not me, my friend!

Me, by no means dead
In that hour, but surely
When this book, unread,
Rots to earth obscurely,
And no more to any breast,
Close against the clamorous swelling
Of the thing there is no telling,
Are these pages pressed!

When this book is mold,
And a book of many
Waiting to be sold
For a casual penny,
In a little open case,
In a street unclean and cluttered,
Where a heavy mud is spattered
From the passing drays,

Stranger, pause and look;
  From the dust of ages
Lift this little book,
  Turn the tattered pages,
Read me, do not let me die!
  Search the fading letters, finding
  Steadfast in the broken binding
All that once was I!

When these veins are weeds,
  When these hollowed sockets
Watch the rooty seeds
  Bursting down like rockets,
And surmise the spring again,
  Or, remote in that black cupboard,
  Watch the pink worms writhing upward
At the smell of rain,

Boys and girls that lie
  Whispering in the hedges,
Do not let me die,
  Mix me in your pledges;
Boys and girls that slowly walk
  In the woods, and weep, and quarrel,
  Staring past the pink wild laurel,
Mix me with your talk.

Do not let me die!
  Farmers at your raking,
When the sun is high,
  While the hay is making,
When, along the stubble strewn,
  Withering on their stalks uneaten,
  Strawberries turn dark and sweeten
In the lapse of noon;

Shepherds on the hills,
  In the pastures, drowsing
To the tinkling bells
  Of the brown sheep browsing;

Sailors crying through the storm;
Scholars at your study; hunters
Lost amid the whirling winter's
Whiteness uniform;

Men that long for sleep;
Men that wake and revel;—
If an old song leap
To your senses' level
At such moments, may it be
Sometimes, though a moment only,
Some forgotten, quaint and homely
Vehicle of me!

Women at your toil,
Women at your leisure
Till the kettle boil,
Snatch of me your pleasure,
Where the broom-straw marks the leaf;
Women quiet with your weeping
Lest you wake a workman sleeping,
Mix me with your grief!

Boys and girls that steal
From the shocking laughter
Of the old, to kneel
By a dripping rafter
Under the discolored eaves,
Out of trunks with hingeless covers
Lifting tales of saint and lovers,
Travelers, goblins, thieves,

Suns that shine by night,
Mountains made from valleys,—
Bear me to the light,
Flat upon your bellies
By the webby window lie,
Where the little flies are crawling,—
Read me, margin me with scrawling,
Do not let me die!

Sexton, ply your trade!
In a shower of gravel
Stamp upon your spade!
Many a rose shall ravel,
Many a metal wreath shall rust
In the rain, and I go singing
Through the lots where you are flinging
Yellow clay on dust!

JUSTICE DENIED IN MASSACHUSETTS[1]

Let us abandon then our gardens and go home
And sit in the sitting-room.
Shall the larkspur blossom or the corn grow under this cloud?
Sour to the fruitful seed
Is the cold earth under this cloud,
Fostering quack and weed, we have marched upon but cannot conquer;
We have bent the blades of our hoes against the stalks of them.

Let us go home, and sit in the sitting-room.
Not in our day
Shall the cloud go over and the sun rise as before,
Beneficent upon us
Out of the glittering bay,
And the warm winds be blown inward from the sea
Moving the blades of corn
With a peaceful sound.
Forlorn, forlorn,
Stands the blue hay-rack by the empty mow.
And the petals drop to the ground,
Leaving the tree unfruited.
The sun that warmed our stooping backs and withered the weed uprooted—
We shall not feel it again.
We shall die in darkness, and be buried in the rain.

What from the splendid dead
We have inherited—
Furrows sweet to the grain, and the weed subdued—

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[1] Written after the final decision in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

See now the slug and the mildew plunder.
Evil does overwhelm
The larkspur and the corn;
We have seen them go under.

Let us sit here, sit still,
Here in the sitting-room until we die;
At the step of Death on the walk, rise and go;
Leaving to our children's children this beautiful doorway,
And this elm,
And a blighted earth to till
With a broken hoe.

EUCLID ALONE HAS LOOKED ON BEAUTY BARE

Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.
Let all who prate of Beauty hold their peace,
And lay them prone upon the earth and cease
To ponder on themselves, the while they stare
At nothing, intricately drawn nowhere
In shapes of shifting lineage; let geese
Gabble and hiss, but heroes seek release
From dusty bondage into luminous air.

O blinding hour, O holy, terrible day,
When first the shaft into his vision shone
Of light anatomized! Euclid alone
Has looked on Beauty bare. Fortunate they
Who, though once only and then but far away,
Have heard her massive sandal set on stone.

DEPARTURE

It's little I care what path I take,
  And where it leads it's little I care;
But out of this house, lest my heart break,
  I must go, and off somewhere.

It's little I know what's in my heart,
  What's in my mind it's little I know,
But there's that in me must up and start,
  And it's little I care where my feet go.

I wish I could walk for a day and a night,
  And find me at dawn in a desolate place
With never the rut of a road in sight,
  Nor the roof of a house, nor the eyes of a face.

I wish I could walk till my blood should spout,
  And drop me, never to stir again,
On a shore that is wide, for the tide is out,
  And the weedy rocks are bare to the rain.

But dump or dock, where the path I take
  Brings up, it's little enough I care;
And it's little I'd mind the fuss they'll make,
  Huddled dead in a ditch somewhere.

"Is something the matter, dear," she said,
  "That you sit at your work so silently?"
"No, mother, no, 'twas a knot in my thread.
  There goes the kettle, I'll make the tea."

I SHALL GO BACK

I shall go back again to the bleak shore
And build a little shanty on the sand
In such a way that the extremest band
Of brittle seaweed will escape my door
But by a yard or two, and nevermore
Shall I return to take you by the hand;
I shall be gone to what I understand
And happier than I ever was before.

The love that stood a moment in your eyes,
The words that lay a moment on your tongue,
Are one with all that in a moment dies,
A little under-said and over-sung;
But I shall find the sullen rocks and skies
Unchanged from what they were when I was young.

ELEGY

Let them bury your big eyes
In the secret earth securely,

Your thin fingers, and your fair,
Soft, indefinite-colored hair,—
All of these in some way, surely,
From the secret earth shall rise.
Not for these I sit and stare,
Broken and bereft completely;
Your young flesh that sat so neatly
On your little bones will sweetly
Blossom in the air.

But your voice,—never the rushing
Of a river underground,
Not the rising of the wind
In the trees before the rain,
Not the woodcock's watery call,
Not the note the white-throat utters,
Not the feet of children pushing
Yellow leaves along the gutters
In the blue and bitter fall,
Shall content my musing mind
For the beauty of that sound
That in no new way at all
Ever will be heard again.

Sweetly through the sappy stalk
Of the vigorous weed,
Holding all it held before,
Cherished by the faithful sun,
On and on eternally
Shall your altered fluid run,
Bud and bloom and go to seed;
But your singing days are done;
But the music of your talk
Never shall the chemistry
Of the secret earth restore.
All your lovely words are spoken.
Once the ivory box is broken,
Beats the golden bird no more.

WHAT LIPS MY LIPS HAVE KISSED

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply;
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone;
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

PITY ME NOT

Pity me not because the light of day
At close of day no longer walks the sky;
Pity me not for beauties passed away
From field and thicket as the year goes by;
Pity me not the waning of the moon,
Nor that the ebbing tide goes out to sea,
Nor that a man's desire is hushed so soon,
And you no longer look with love on me.

This have I known always: love is no more
Than the wide blossom which the wind assails;
Than the great tide that treads the shifting shore,
Strewing fresh wreckage gathered in the gales.
Pity me that the heart is slow to learn
What the swift mind beholds at every turn.

SONNET TO GATH

Country of hunchbacks!—where the strong, straight spine
Jeered at by crooked children, makes his way
Through by-streets at the kindest hour of day,
Till he deplore his stature, and incline

To measure manhood with a gibbous line;
Till out of loneliness, being flawed with clay,
He stoop into his neighbor's house and say,
"Your roof is low for me—the fault is mine."

Dust in an urn long since, dispersed and dead
Is great Apollo; and the happier he;
Since who amongst you all would lift a head
At a god's radiance on the mean door-tree,
Saving to run and hide your dates and bread,
And cluck your children in about your knee?

THE CAMEO

Forever over now, forever, forever gone
That day. Clear and diminished like a scene
Carven in cameo, the lighthouse, and the cove between
The sandy cliffs, and the boat drawn up on the beach;
And the long skirt of a lady innocent and young,
Her hand resting on her bosom, her head hung;
And the figure of a man in earnest speech.

Clear and diminished like a scene cut in cameo
The lighthouse, and the boat on the beach, and the two shapes
Of the woman and the man; lost like the lost day
Are the words that passed, and the pain,—discarded, cut away
From the stone, as from the memory the heat of the tears
escapes.

O troubled forms, O early love unfortunate and hard,
Time has estranged you into a jewel cold and pure;
From the action of the waves and from the action of sorrow
forever secure,
White against a ruddy cliff you stand, chalcedony on sard.

ON HEARING A SYMPHONY OF BEETHOVEN

Sweet sounds, oh, beautiful music, do not cease!
Reject me not into the world again.
With you alone is excellence and peace,
Mankind made plausible, his purpose plain.

Enchanted in your air benign and shrewd,
With limbs a-sprawl and empty faces pale,
The spiteful and the stingy and the rude
Sleep like the scullions in the fairy-tale.
This moment is the best the world can give:
The tranquil blossom on the tortured stem.
Reject me not, sweet sounds! oh, let me live,
Till Doom espy my towers and scatter them,
A city spell-bound under the aging sun.
Music my rampart, and my only one.

EDWIN CURRAN

Edwin Curran was born at Zanesville, Ohio, May 10, 1892, and was educated at St. Thomas' School in the city of his birth. After working as an unskilled laborer in various trades, he learned telegraphy in 1914 and was employed as an operator for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. He moved to California in 1926.

In 1917 he printed a little paper-bound pamphlet of thirty pages (*First Poems*) with this naïve note: "Price of this book is 35 cents postpaid. Author is 25, unmarried, a beginner and needs publisher. If this volume meets expenses, another, possibly better, will be issued." Expecting to find poetry of an absurd simplicity, one is startled to find striking images, strange pictures and (in such poems as "Soldier's Epitaph" and "Sailing of Columbus") lines like:

> We climbed the slippery alleys of the sea

and many a lyric flash like:

> The stars, like bells, flash down the silver sky . . .
> Ringing like chimes on frozen trees, or cry
> Along the marble ground.

Second Poems (1920), *The Last Judgment* (1924) and *The Poems of G. E. Curran* (1928) have a similar beauty mixed with banality. These booklets are a jumble of passion, platitude, bad grammar and exaltation. Curran has no critical perceptions; he has little control over his music. For better or for worse, his mood controls him.

AUTUMN

The music of the autumn wind sings low,
Down by the ruins of the painted hills,
Where death lies flaming with a marvelous glow,
Upon the ash of rose and daffodils.
But I can find no melancholy here
To see the naked rocks and thinning trees;
Earth strips to grapple with the winter year—
I see her gnarled hills plan for victories!

I love the earth who goes to battle now,
To struggle with the wintry whipping storm
And bring the glorious spring out from the night.
I see earth's muscles bared, her battle brow,
And am not sad, but feel her marvelous charm
As splendidly she plunges in the fight.

THE PAINTED HILLS OF ARIZONA

The rainbows all lie crumpled on these hills,
The red dawns scattered on their colored sills.
These hills have caught the lightning in its flight,
Caught colors from the skies of day and night
And shine with shattered stars and suns; they hold
Dyed yellow, red and purple, blue and gold.
Red roses seem within their marble blown,
A painted garden chiseled in the stone;
The rose and violet trickling through their veins,
Where they drop brilliant curtains to the plains—
A ramp of rock and granite, jeweled and brightening
Like some great colored wall of sudden lightning!

MAXWELL BODENHEIM

Maxwell Bodenheim was born at Natchez, Mississippi, May 26, 1892. His education, with the exception of grammar school training, was achieved under the guidance of the U. S. Army, in which Bodenheim served a full enlistment of three years, beginning in 1910. For a while he studied law and art in Chicago, but his mind, fascinated by the new poetry, turned to literature. He wrote steadily for four years without having a single poem accepted. In 1918 his first volume appeared and even those who were puzzled or repelled by Bodenheim's complex idiom were forced to recognize its individuality.

Minna and Myself (1918) reveals, first of all, this poet's sensitivity to words. Words, under his hands, have unexpected growths; placid nouns and sober adjectives bear fantastic fruit. Sometimes he packs his metaphors so close that they become inextricably confused. Sometimes he spins his fantasies so thin that the cord of coherence snaps and the poem frays into unpatterned ravelings. Still, at his best, Bodenheim is clear-headed and colorful.

In *Advice* (1920) Bodenheim's manner—and his mannerisms—are intensified. There is scarcely a phrase that is not tricked out with more ornaments and associations than it can bear; whole poems sink beneath the weight of profuse decorations. But this volume gives evidence of the ironic imagination which dominates his subsequent work.

Introducing Irony (1922) and *Against This Age* (1923) allow the sardonic impulse to dictate its harshest accents. The communication is more involved than ever: the expression of an acrobatic mind that juggles a dozen mixed metaphors, balancing itself meanwhile upon the knives of emotion with a mordant grimace. *The Sardonic Arm* (1923) shows an author acrid, grotesque, verbally dandified—but seldom unintelligible. Even when Bodenheim writes in the spirit of resentment self-confessed in *Against This Age*, he has something to say which the reader, provoked though he may be by the author's supercilious disdain, might listen to with profit. It is, nevertheless, still true that Bodenheim too often writes in the rôle of literary ring-master, cracking his savage whip over cowering adjectives and recalcitrant adverbs, compelling them to leap in unwilling pairs over the fantastically piled barriers of his imagination.

In *The King of Spain and Other Poems* (1928) Bodenheim continues to exercise his invectives. Yet, in spite of the egotism of the notes which precede and follow many of the poems, the work is sharp, unhackneyed, and brittle. It is obvious that no such language has ever been spoken as the conversation detailed in his volumes; not his characters but the author himself does all the talking; and it is he, a breathlessly sardonic euphuist, who leaps desperately from one image to another. But the images themselves are glittering, and in the realm of the whimsical-grotesque, Bodenheim's footing is sure; his is a nimble if disturbing transilience.

An effort to please popular taste, *Bringing Jazz* (1930), lived up neither to its title nor to its author's reputation for the unusual.

Bodenheim is also the author of several novels, *Crazy Man*

(1924), *Replenishing Jessica* (1925) and *Sixty Seconds* (1929) being the most successful as well as the most self-revealing.

POET TO HIS LOVE

An old silver church in a forest
Is my love for you.
The trees around it
Are words that I have stolen from your heart.
An old silver bell, the last smile you gave,
Hangs at the top of my church.
It rings only when you come through the forest
And stand beside it.
And then it has no need for ringing,
For your voice takes its place.

OLD AGE

In me is a little painted square
Bordered by old shops with gaudy awnings.
And before the shops sit smoking, open-bloused old men,
Drinking sunlight.
The old men are my thoughts;
And I come to them each evening, in a creaking cart,
And quietly unload supplies.
We fill slim pipes and chat
And inhale scents from pale flowers in the center of the square. . . .
Strong men, tinkling women, and dripping, squealing children
Stroll past us, or into the shops.
They greet the shopkeepers and touch their hats or foreheads to me. . . .
Some evening I shall not return to my people.

DEATH

I shall walk down the road;
I shall turn and feel upon my feet
The kisses of Death, like scented rain.
For Death is a black slave with little silver birds
Perched in a sleeping wreath upon his head.
He will tell me, his voice like jewels

Dropped into a satin bag,
How he has tip-toed after me down the road,
His heart made a dark whirlpool with longing for me.
Then he will graze me with his hands,
And I shall be one of the sleeping, silver birds
Between the cold waves of his hair, as he tip-toes on.

HILL-SIDE TREE

Like a drowsy, rain-browned saint,
You squat, and sometimes your voice,
In which the wind takes no part,
Is like mists of music wedding each other.
A drunken, odor-laced peddler is the morning wind.
He brings you golden-scarfed cities
Whose voices are swirls of bells burdened with summer;
And maidens whose hearts are galloping princes.
And you raise your branches to the sky,
With a whisper that holds the smile you cannot shape.

FACTORY GIRL

Why are your eyes like dry brown flower-pods,
Still, gripped by the memory of lost petals?
I feel that if I touched them
They would crumble to falling brown dust
And you would stand with blindness revealed.
Yet you would not shrink, for your life
Has been long since memorized,
And eyes would only melt out against its high walls.
Besides, in the making of boxes
Sprinkled with crude forget-me-nots,
One is curiously blessed if one's eyes are dead.

ADVICE TO A BLUE-BIRD

Who can make a delicate adventure
Of walking on the ground?
Who can make grass-blades
Arcades for pertly careless straying?
You alone, who skim against these leaves,

Turning all desire into light whips
Molded by your deep blue wing-tips,
You who shrill your unconcern
Into the sternly antique sky.
You to whom all things
Hold an equal kiss of touch.

Mincing, wanton blue-bird,
Grimace at the hoofs of passing men.
You alone can lose yourself
Within a sky, and rob it of its blue!

ARCHIBALD MacLEISH

Archibald MacLeish was born in Glencoe, northern Illinois, May 7, 1892. The son of a Scotch merchant and a Connecticut clergyman's daughter, he spent his boyhood on the lake shore, was educated in the public schools of his native town, a Connecticut preparatory school, Yale University, and Harvard Law School. He served in the Field Artillery in France during the War, became a lawyer in Boston and gave up the practice of law for literature, living in the Berkshires during the summer and in Paris during the winter.

MacLeish's first volume, *Tower of Ivory* (1917), gave few hints of the original talent that was revealed in *The Happy Marriage* (1924), *The Pot of Earth* (1925) and the curious *Nobodaddy* (1925). There are influences apparent in all of these. *The Happy Marriage* owes not a little to Conrad Aiken and E. A. Robinson; *The Pot of Earth* relies on T. S. Eliot's structure as well as his free use of dissonance and peculiar juxtapositions. But MacLeish has something to say which is quite his own, something about man's uncertain place in the Unknown.

In *Streets in the Moon* (1926) the complete poet emerges. Here his subject-matter, conceived in amplitude, conveys an unusual "sense of infinity." But it is his idiom even more than his theme which makes MacLeish an important representative of modern poetry. He can, by the skillful use of repetition, achieve new effects in harmony, he can prompt a new beat in even so old a form as the sonnet, *vide* "The End of the World." "Ars Poetica" is more than an extension of poetic language; beneath its successful experiments in timing, interior rhyme and suspension, it says a number of pointed and profound things which have nothing to do with timeliness and changing tastes. The tone of these verses may be as new as this generation; the spirit which moves beneath them is as old as the sung phrase and the unspoken word.

The Hamlet of A. MacLeish (1928) is clearer in pattern and suppler in power than any of his other long poems. Its blemishes are those of confirmed modernity. Speaking of its author, Conrad Aiken says, "He is a kind of slave of tradition, with the difference that the traditions which enslave him are contemporary ones." MacLeish has not completely thrown off the influence of Eliot and various modern French poets, but his conceptions are so much his own that no one could mistake the originality of his design. In *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish*, the poet has plunged deeper into himself. The half-conscious breaks through; remote associations, shifting allusions, disordered griefs, phantasms, fag-ends of memories float up. By overtone and undercurrent, the reader is led to identify himself—as the author has done—with the eternal Hamlet, that conglomeration of lover, poet, procrastinator, ranter, doer, and doubter. Here (as in "Memorial Rain," which says more about the War than any poetry since Sassoon's, and in the cunning music of "You, Andrew Marvell," which is an extraordinary accomplishment in suspension) the tone is noble. But it is neither phrase-making nor accent which distinguishes MacLeish. It is the discipline which he imposes on the chaos of the subconscious; it is his orderly employment of material almost too fluent to fix. His larger work proves that, beginning with the short, lyrical breath, the poet knows how to hold the long line. Even the craftsman's experiments in rhymed consonants, his inconsistent punctuation (or lack of it), and his refusal to make the orthodox typographical gestures cannot conceal the true—and the traditional—poet.

ARS POETICA

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds

. . . .

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs

. . . .

A poem should be equal to:
Not true

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.

PROLOGUE

These alternate nights and days, these seasons
Somehow fail to convince me. It seems
I have the sense of infinity!

(In your dreams, O crew of Columbus,
O listeners over the sea
For the surf that breaks upon Nothing—)

Once I was waked by the nightingales
In the garden. I thought, "What time is it? I thought,
Time—Is it Time still?—Now is it Time?

(Tell me your dreams, O sailors:
Tell me, in sleep did you climb
The tall masts, and before you—)

At night the stillness of old trees
Is a leaning over, and the inertness
Of hills is a kind of waiting.

(In sleep, in a dream, did you see
The world's end? Did the water
Break—and no shore— Did you see?)

Strange faces come through the streets to me
Like messengers: and I have been warned
By the moving slowly of hands at a window.

O, I have the sense of infinity—
But the world, sailors, is round.
They say there is no end to it.

IN MY THIRTIETH YEAR

And I have come upon this place
  By lost ways, by a nod, by words,
By faces, by the old man's face
  At Morlaix lifted to the birds,

By hands upon the table cloth
  At Aldebori's, by the thin
Child's hands that opened to the moth
  And let the flutter of the moonlight in,

By hands, by voices, by the voice
  Of Mrs. Husman on the stair,
By Margaret's "If we had the choice
  To choose or not—" through her thick hair,

By voices, by the creak and fall
  Of footsteps on the upper floor,
By silence waiting in the hall
  Between the door-bell and the door,

By words, by voices, a lost way—
  And here above the chimney stack
The unknown constellations sway—
  And by what way shall I go back?

MEMORIAL RAIN

Ambassador Puser the ambassador
Reminds himself in French, felicitous tongue,
What these (young men no longer) lie here for
In rows that once, and somewhere else, were young—

All night in Brussels the wind had tugged at my door:
I had heard the wind at my door and the trees strung
Taut, and to me who had never been before
In that country it was a strange wind blowing
Steadily, stiffening the walls, the floor,
The roof of my room. I had not slept for knowing
He too, dead, was a stranger in that land
And felt beneath the earth in the wind's flowing
A tightening of roots and would not understand,
Remembering lake winds in Illinois,
That strange wind. I had felt his bones in the sand
Listening.

—Reflects that these enjoy
Their country's gratitude, that deep repose,
That peace no pain can break, no hurt destroy,
That rest, that sleep—

At Ghent the wind rose.
There was a smell of rain and a heavy drag
Of wind in the hedges but not as the wind blows
Over fresh water when the waves lag
Foaming and the willows huddle and it will rain:
I felt him waiting.

—Indicates the flag
Which (may he say) enisles in Flanders' plain
This little field these happy, happy dead
Have made America—

In the ripe grain
The wind coiled glistening, darted, fled,
Dragging its heavy body: at Waereghem
The wind coiled in the grass above his head:
Waiting—listening—

—Dedicates to them
This earth their bones have hallowed, this last gift
A grateful country—

Under the dry grass stem
The words are blurred, are thickened, the words sift
Confused by the rasp of the wind, by the thin grating
Of ants under the grass, the minute shift
And tumble of dusty sand separating
From dusty sand. The roots of the grass strain,
Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits—he is waiting—

And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

The people scatter, they run into houses, the wind
Is trampled under the rain, shakes free, is again
Trampled. The rain gathers, running in thinned
Spurts of water that ravel in the dry sand
Seeping into the sand under the grass roots, seeping
Between cracked boards to the bones of a clenched
hand:
The earth relaxes, loosens; he is sleeping,
He rests, he is quiet, he sleeps in a strange land.

WEATHER

The northeast wind was the wind off the lake
Blowing the oak leaves pale side out like
Aspen blowing the sound of the surf far
Inland over the fences blowing for
Miles over smell of earth the alien
Lake smell
The southwest wind was thunder on
Afternoon: you saw the wind first in the vine
Over the side porch and the weather vane
Whirled and the doors slammed all together.
After the rain in the grass we used to gather
Wind-fallen cold white apples
The west
Wind was the August wind, the wind over waste
Valleys over the waterless plains where still

Were skulls of buffalo where in the sand stale
Dung lay of wild cattle. The west wind blew
Day after day as the winds on the plains blow
Burning the grass turning the leaves brown filling
Noon with the bronze of cicadas far out falling
Dark on the colorless water, the lake where not
Waves were nor movement
The north wind was at night
When no leaves and the husk on the oak stirs
Only nor birds then. The north wind was stars
Over the whole sky and snow in the ways
And snow on the gray sand where the beach was
North here is the sea and westward the sea
And south the Tyrrhenian sea where the hills saw
Once the long oars and the helmsman. But here to me
The winds blow as always they blew in my
Country,
the winds blow out of Illinois,
Out of Missouri, out of Michigan. I know
The northeast wind: I know how the trees look—
The northeast wind is the wind over the lake
Blowing the oak leaves pale side out. . . .

IMMORTAL AUTUMN

I speak this poem now with grave and level voice
In praise of autumn of the far horn winding fall
I praise the flower barren fields the clouds the tall
Unanswering branches where the wind makes sullen noise

I praise the fall it is the human season now
No more the foreign sun does meddle at our earth
Enforce the green and thaw the frozen soil to birth
Nor winter yet weigh all with silence the pine bough

But now in autumn with the black and outcast crows
Share we the spacious world the whispering year is gone
There is more room to live now the once secret dawn
Comes late by daylight and the dark unguarded goes

Between the mutinous brave burning of the leaves
And winter's covering of our hearts with his deep snow
We are alone there are no evening birds we know
The naked moon the tame stars circle at our eaves

It is the human season on this sterile air
No words outcarry breath the sound goes on and on
I hear a dead man's cry from autumn long since gone
I cry to you beyond this bitter air.

YOU, ANDREW MARVELL

And here face down beneath the sun,
And here upon earth's noonward height,
To feel the always coming on,
The always rising of the night.

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever-climbing shadow grow,

And strange at Ecbatan the trees
Take leaf by leaf the evening, strange,
The flooding dark about their knees,
The mountains over Persia change,

And now at Kermanshah the gate,
Dark, empty, and the withered grass,
And through the twilight now the late
Few travelers in the westward pass.

And Baghdad darken and the bridge
Across the silent river gone,
And through Arabia the edge
Of evening widen and steal on,

And deepen on Palmyra's street
The wheel rut in the ruined stone,
And Lebanon fade out and Crete
High through the clouds and overblown,

And over Sicily the air
Still flashing with the landward gulls,
And loom and slowly disappear
The sails above the shadowy hulls,

And Spain go under and the shore
Of Africa, the gilded sand,
And evening vanish and no more
The low pale light across that land,

Nor now the long light on the sea—

And here face downward in the sun
To feel how swift, how secretly,
The shadow of the night comes on. . . .

THE END OF THE WORLD

Quite unexpectedly as Vasserot
The armless ambidextrian was lighting
A match between his great and second toe
And Ralph the lion was engaged in biting
The neck of Mme. Sossman while the drum
Pointed, and Teeny was about to cough
In waltz-time swinging Jocko by the thumb—
Quite unexpectedly the top blew off:

And there, there overhead, there, there, hung over
Those thousands of white faces, those dazed eyes,
There in the starless dark, the poise, the hover,
There with vast wings across the canceled skies,
There in the sudden blackness, the black pall
Of nothing, nothing, nothing—nothing at all.

WINIFRED WELLES

Winifred Welles was born at Norwich Town, Connecticut, January 26, 1893, and educated in the vicinity of her home. After her marriage she moved to New York.

Her delicately fashioned lyrics are the feature of *The Hesitant Heart* (1920). This first volume, so appropriately named, has an unabashed tenderness which never grows maudlin and a wistful questioning that never forgets to sing.

For a while Miss Welles was one of the editors of *The Measure* in which some of her best verse appeared. *This Delicate Love* (1929) shows that her standards have reached to a more complete craftsmanship, the lines have grown surer and keener edged. "Actual Willow" and "Harvest Dust" are typical of her later work, slender in substance but firm in line.

FROM A CHINESE VASE

Roaming the lonely garden, he and I
Pursue each other to the fountain's brim,
And there grow quiet—woman and butterfly—
The frail clouds beckon me, the flowers tempt him.

My thoughts are rose-like, beautiful and bright,
Folded precise as petals are, and wings
Uplift my dreaming suddenly in flight,
And fill my soul with jagged colorings.

The waters tangle like a woman's hair
Above the dim reflection of a face—
He thinks those are his own lips laughing there,
His own breasts curving under silk and lace.

How shall we know our real selves, he and I,
Which is the woman, which the butterfly?

LOVE SONG FROM NEW ENGLAND

In every solemn tree the wind
  Has rung a little lonesome bell,
As sweet and clear, as cool and kind
  As my voice bidding you farewell.

This is an hour that gods have loved
  To snatch with bare, bright hands and hold.
Mine, with a gesture, gray and gloved,
  Dismiss it from me in the cold.

Closely as some dark-shuttered house
I keep my light. How should you know,
That, as you turn beneath brown boughs,
My heart is breaking in the snow?

ACTUAL WILLOW

Once when I looked at willows, I would say,
"Thin-fingered women are underneath that hair!"
Or, at the close of a quieter day,
A flock of tall birds would seem standing there
On single legs, heads tucked in for the night
Under gray-green plumage—
"Willow, willow is the note
If roots turn claws, and boughs go up in flight!"
Or, "A river-woman with a long white throat
Will come if I call 'Willow!' "
So I would say
When I looked at willows once— But today,
The actual willow, the fact of a tree
Seems fanciful and beautiful enough for me.

HARVEST DUST

The road is burnt to dust, like more dust meadow rue
Smokes in the meadow. Berries are balanced to fall
At a cowbell's echo. Apples will soon be over, nothing is left to do
For the trees but to crook their elbows on the wall.

In the farmhouse doorway a woman husking corn
Droops to where, softer than children's hair, a yellow heap
Of the silk fondles her hand. Under her eyes her face is as worn
As the stone steps where she sits and has fallen asleep.

What is it all for? Why must the earth crack
Over and over beneath this searing breath?
Only that apples be amber and berries black,
And women content and wearied unto death.

Herbert S. Gorman was born at Springfield, Massachusetts, January 1, 1893. After attending the Technical High School he became an actor for two seasons, deserting the stage for the newspaper. He became assistant literary and dramatic editor of the Springfield *Union,* reporter on the New York *Sun* and reviewer for the New York *Post*, *The Freeman* and other journals.

His first book, *The Fool of Love* (1920), shows, beyond an indebtedness to E. A. Robinson, a keen talent and fresh personality. The best of these verses were reprinted with many new ones in *The Barcarole of James Smith and Other Poems* (1922). Gorman had read his Eliot to good purpose, but his own bent kept him from too servile imitation. Meanwhile, he had attracted attention as a critic through his reviews in The New York *Times* and elsewhere, his first extended critical work appearing in 1924: *James Joyce: His First Forty Years.* Having steeped himself in the idiom of *Ulysses,* it is not unnatural that Gorman's novel should reflect the kaleidoscopic manner of Joyce. But *Gold by Gold* (1925) unfolds its own legend, a problem which is obviously the poet's.

Gorman has also written several biographies, *The Incredible Marquis* (1929), which is the life of that incurable romanticist, Alexandre Dumas, being the sprightliest.

THE FANATIC

Well, here it is: you call for me: I come,
  But with an eagerness not quite my own;
Propelled by that decisive martyrdom
  That pleased the saints upon their faggot throne.

You see them smiling in the cruel flame
  That exquisitely licks their willing limbs,
And finding some sad pleasure in the game
  Not quite embodied in their lusty hymns.

And so I come: and though I go, be sure
  That I will come again tomorrow, too;
And, Love's fanatic, hasten to endure
  The littleness that is so great in you.

I am the weakling of that helpless strength
  That throws this broken body you despise
Before your carelessness, to find at length
  The faith that sleeps behind your faithless eyes.

John Van Alstyn Weaver was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1893. While still a child he went to live in Chicago where he was educated (he also attended Hamilton College and Harvard), and became a member of the staff of the Chicago *Daily News*. He left that paper in 1917 to enter the army, serving as a second lieutenant during the war. In 1920 he was appointed literary editor of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, resigning from that position in 1924. Since 1927 he has spent much time in the cinema-studios of Hollywood.

Besides his verse Weaver has published one prose volume, *Margey Wins the Game* (1922), a work which his friends are happy to forget. His most characteristic efforts are in *In American* (1921), and *Finders* (1923). In these two volumes current slang is used with clever effectiveness and occasional poetic value. Subway-guards, shopgirls, "sporty" freshmen, and the whole race of "hard-boiled" gum-chewers find their celebrant in Weaver's alert lines. Weaver was by no means the first to experiment in the use of the vernacular as a medium for rhyme. From a technical standpoint, his feat of writing sonnets in the American vulgate (*vide* "Ghost") is neither so much of a novelty nor a *tour de force* as *The Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum*, written by Wallace Irwin in 1901. But Weaver has introduced new ideas as well as new vivacities of speech; the background of a jazz civilization is implicit in his rhymed stories which, seldom humorous, are almost solemn and not infrequently sentimental.

In *Finders* and *More in American* (1926) Weaver achieves a more detached attitude; the slang is not so insistent, the emotion less soft. Whatever his limitations, there can be no doubt about the documentary value of his experiments.

GHOST

I'm comin' back and haunt you, don't you fret.
  What if I get as far as Hell away?
  They's things of me that just can't help but stay—
Whether I want or not, you can't forget.

Just when you think you got me wiped out clear,
  Some bird that's singin'—moonlight on a hill—
  Some lovely thing'll hurt like it would kill,
And you'll hear somethin' whisperin', "He's here!"

And when somebody holds you closte, like this,
And you start in to feel your pulses race,
The face that's pressin' yours'll be my face;
My lips'll be the ones your lips'll kiss.

Don't cry . . . Which do you think it'll hurt most?—
Oh, God! You think I want to be a ghost? . . .

TWO WAYS

Oncet in the Museum
We seen a little rose
In a jar of alcohol—
You turns up your nose:
"That's the way people think
Love ought to be—
Last forever! Pickled roses!
None o' that for me!"

That night was fireworks
Out to Riverview—
Gold and red and purple
Bustin' over you.
"Beautiful!" you says then,
"That's how love should be!
Burn wild and die quick—
That's the love for me!"

Now you're gone for good . . . Say,
Wasn't they no other way?

ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

Elizabeth J. Coatsworth was born in 1893 in Buffalo, New York. After extended travels she returned to America, where she divides her time between California and an old house overlooking the harbor of Hingham, Massachusetts. She married Henry Beston, author of *Outermost House* and other books, in 1929.

Miss Coatsworth made her début with *Fox Footprints* (1921), a group of images and studies in the Oriental mood. Coming at a time when the country was surfeited with adaptations from the

Chinese and paraphrases from the Japanese, Miss Coatsworth's volume was treated merely as another set of echoes. But, beneath the exotic influences, there was a vein of fresh imagery, a native fancy which was no more Eastern than Miss Coatsworth's own spirit.

Atlas and Beyond (1924) was a far more original piece of work. Although it, too, finds its subjects over-seas, there is nothing of the usual travel-book flavor in any poem, the section entitled "Italy" being particularly delightful because of its mixture of grace and irony.

Compass Rose (1929) has, as the title suggests, something of that mixture of accuracy and fancy, of explicit direction and charming vagueness characteristic of the old animated maps. As a rhyming explorer, Miss Coatsworth must be numbered among the more observant mariners. She is one for whom the fact is but the beginning of the story; to observation she adds imagination, and so brings home an unusually colorful report. Not that her level is always serene; she falters just when she is about to attain the heights. Miss Coatsworth frequently announces a theme of prime significance, but fails to develop it. When the poet is least ambitious she is most successful. Her imaginative ballads are pointed and persuasive; her practiced hand strikes the notes squarely, running bright scales with ease and something like brilliance. She sounds the ironically braggart in "Announcement," the mysteriously macabre in "A Lady Comes to an Inn," the muffled heroic in "Daniel Webster's Horses." But it is in the animal poems that she is happiest and seems most herself. In "The Old Mare," "The Circus-Postered Barn," "The Bad Kittens," "On a Night of Snow" she mingles humor, pity and a faint satire. These are poems to which the reader is likely to turn for more than their gravely uttered whimsicality.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Let it be understood that I am Don Juan Gomez!
My blood is pure blood from the proudest blood of Spain,
And I own hills and valleys beyond a long day's riding,
And heavy lies the silver upon my bridle rein.

Let it be understood that I am Don Juan Gomez!
My saddle cloth is fringed with scalps of Indians I have slain,
And when I see a girl and knock upon her shutter,
Though it be dawn or dark, I need not knock again.

Let it be understood that I am Don Juan Gomez!
Only in prayer to bend the knee and bow the head I deign;
And when I pray the saints go hurrying to the Virgin,
And cry, "Don Juan is praying, and must not pray in vain!"

THE OLD MARE

Gray despair
Was on the old mare,
Grass turned bitter,
Sky a-glare,
And gnats like thoughts,
And thoughts like gnats,
Everywhere.

Her underlip
Hung pendulous wide,
Her ears twitched back,
Her dusty hide
Heaved with her heavy breathing
And her eyes rolled ominously
To one side.

The mule colt lay
In trampled grass,
Slick-tailed, long-eared,
Bespeaking the ass
Carried so long in her body,
Born in travail and sweat—
Alien, alas.

But staggering
To unsteady feet
The mule colt fumbles
An unknown teat;
And the old mare relaxes and sighs,
Finding any motherhood
Most sweet.

DANIEL WEBSTER'S HORSES

If when the wind blows
Rattling the trees,
Clicking like skeletons'
Elbows and knees,

You hear along the road
Three horses pass—
Do not go near the dark
Cold window-glass.

If when the first snow lies
Whiter than bones
You see the mark of hoofs
Cut to the stones,

Hoofs of three horses
Going abreast—
Turn about, turn about,
A closed door is best!

Upright in the earth
Under the sod
They buried three horses
Bridled and shod,

Daniel Webster's horses—
He said as he grew old,
"Flesh, I loved riding,
Shall I not love it, cold?

"Shall I not love to ride
Bone astride bone,
When the cold wind blows
And snow covers stone?

"Bury them on their feet
With bridle and bit.
They were fine horses—
See their shoes fit."

THE CIRCUS-POSTERED BARN

When Dobbin and Robin, unharnessed from the plow,
Stamp smoking to their stalls,
They pass beneath white horses with long manes
Shining upon the walls,
White horses airily leaping through great hoops
Along applauding tracks
Or carrying princesses in rosy tights
Upon their backs.

And Daisy, Madge and Buttercup
Raise their soft eyes,
Where through the darkness of the web-hung stable
Hippopotami arise,
Shaking the water from their enormous shoulders
Floundering in savage mud,
Showing those muzzles huge enough to ponder
An epic cud.

And Tom beside a rat-hole in the boarding
Meets the still stare
Of eyes fiercer than his eyes and a large lithe body
Above him there—
Despondent grow the inmates of the barnyard;
Not one achieves
The super-powers of those super-mammals
Beneath the eaves!

ST. EVAL

After the plow
The sea gulls follow,
Up the hill
And down the hollow,

A cloud of wings,
A storm of cries
That rise and fall
That fall and rise.

Where the slow brown furrow
Rolls from the share
The sea gulls hover,
Their pale eyes stare.

At the fluid earth
They stare and scream,
White breasts above
The slow brown stream,

And the plowman thinks
Of his youth again,
And a high dark wave
With a horse's mane.

PRETTY FUTILITY

Pretty Futility
Always declares
There's nothing so good
As a basket of pears,

Nothing so tranquil,
Nothing so sweet,
As eating ripe pears
In the quiet of heat.

She straightens her ruffles,
She smiles as she swings,
And when she has eaten
Futility sings.

ON A NIGHT OF SNOW

Cat, if you go outdoors you must walk in the snow.
You will come back with little white shoes on your feet,
Little white slippers of snow that have heels of sleet.
Stay by the fire, my Cat. Lie still, do not go.
See how the flames are leaping and hissing low,
I will bring you a saucer of milk like a marguerite,
So white and so smooth, so spherical and so sweet—
Stay with me, Cat. Out-doors the wild winds blow.

Out-doors the wild winds blow, Mistress, and dark is the night.
Strange voices cry in the trees, intoning strange lore,
And more than cats move, lit by our eyes' green light,
On silent feet where the meadow grasses hang hoar—
Mistress, there are portents abroad of magic and might,
And things that are yet to be done. Open the door!

A LADY COMES TO AN INN

Three strange men came to the inn,
One was a black man pocked and thin,
One was brown with a silver knife,
And one brought with him a beautiful wife.

That lovely woman had hair as pale
As French champagne or finest ale,
That lovely woman was long and slim
As a young white birch or a maple limb.

Her face was like cream, her mouth was a rose,
What language she spoke nobody knows,
But sometimes she'd scream like a cockatoo
And swear wonderful oaths that nobody knew.

Her great silk skirts like a silver bell
Down to her little bronze slippers fell,
And her low-cut gown showed a dove on its nest
In blue tattooing across her breast.

Nobody learned the lady's name
Nor the marvelous land from which they came,
But no one in all the countryside
Has forgotten those men and that beautiful bride.

DONALD DAVIDSON

Donald Davidson was born August 18, 1893, in Campbellsville, Tennessee, and was educated in his native state, receiving his B.A. and M.A. degrees at Vanderbilt University. The son of a schoolteacher, he himself taught for many years, first in high schools and later at Vanderbilt University as Assistant Professor of English. He is one of the group which founded *The Fugitive*, that provocative little monthly which put Nashville on the literary map; in his turn he acted as editor of that magazine, and, later, as literary editor of the *Nashville Tennesseean.*

His first volume, *An Outland Piper*, was published in 1924. The diversity of its contents discloses, beneath a certain amount of echoing, a surplus of poetic energy. Although it is evident that Davidson is still "emerging," a fresh voice rises from many of the verses even when most derivative. And that voice has its own decided *timbre.*

The Tall Men (1927) is a work on a much larger canvas than anything previously attempted by Davidson. It testifies to an interesting phenomenon: that the Tennessee group was not at all "South-conscious" while it was publishing *The Fugitive*, but became very much so immediately upon the demise of its organ. This sectional consciousness may be seen in Ransom's later essays, in Tate's *Stonewall Jackson,* in Davidson's own prose. This consciousness mounted to a passion, a passion unfortunately without followers. The Tennesseean group was concerned with a crisis gathering through the South: the division between those intent on agrarianizing perished backgrounds and those who favor a "new South," a South obviously dominated by the North. *The Tall Men* is an expansion of this dichotomy in which Davidson (in a framework derived from Eliot on one hand and Masters on the other) contrasts the Tennessee of the hunters and soldiers with the Tennessee of the Buick-drivers. "Fire on Belmont Street," which was the Southern Prize Poem for 1926 and which acts as Epilogue, synthesizes *The Tall Men;* Davidson having built up, as Stephen Vincent Benét wrote, "A people, a State, a passage of time, and one man's mind." In the section entitled "Geography of the Brain," there is a part beginning:

I have come a long way, I tell you. I am attended
(The brain is attended here) by motley splendors:
Dust of battles, creak of wagons, vows
Rotting like antique lace; the smiles of women
Broken like glass; the tales of old men blown
From rheumy beards on the vague wind; silk gowns
Crumbling in attics; ruffled shirts on bones
Of gentlemen in forgotten graves; rifles,
Hunting-shirts, Bibles, looms, and desperate
Flags uncrowned.

Here is projected the nostalgia which haunts one part of this poet's work. Here also is a proof that he has come a long way.

CROSS SECTION OF A LANDSCAPE

Here is the ice that girdles joyless ocean;
Water girdling a sphere of quiet slime;
Under it rock that has no light or motion
Save from the twirl, the eternal pantomime.

Under the rock is fire that dies by inches
Over the slag and ash of old decay.
Finally, what? The mathematician pinches
Space to a point, in his ponderable way.

But when I was a boy I searched from pole to pole
Of a gaudy globe, a rainbow colored ball,
Peeled the cover, unraveled the shiny whole
And was vexed to find at center nothing at all.

SPOKEN AT A CASTLE GATE

Before you touch the bolt that locks this gate
Be warned. There's no return where you are going.
A sword is tinder at the touch of fate
And crumbles in a way beyond your knowing.

Something I've heard, but something less I tell.
An old man knows, advises; young men smile,
Blow slug-horns, chink a latch, or clank a bell.
I've watched a many a one this weary while.

You can hear the nightingales, I won't deny.
They always sing for eager souls like you,
Perched on their boughs of possibility,
Most vaguely heard and still more vaguely true.

And they are more, perhaps, than mere tradition.
They must exist, though none come back to say
How they are feathered, or what rare nutrition
Keeps them, piping their sad peculiar lay.

Gardens there are, and Queens, no doubt, a-walking,
White blooms adrift on gold and marvelous hair.
Young men in murmurous dreams have heard them talking,
Leaped up, like you, and entered . . . vanished . . . where?

For all I know, the castle's just a dream,
A shadow piled to mask a dangerous ledge,
A fantasy blown from devils' lungs in steam,
Made permanent here, just on a chasm's edge,

Where you will plunge, forever, ever falling,
For infinite days and nights, a dark lump whirled
That hears or thinks it hears an old voice calling
Beyond the stars that cluster near this world;

A voice that follows you past endless night,
Familiar, yet not quite half-known or named,
The last and sorry remnant of delight
That you lived for, pursued, and touched, and claimed,

Even as you touch the bolt that locks this gate,
Smiling, with patience such as fits old men
Who prophesy. Ah, yes, what you create
Perhaps you'll find,—but never come back again.

FIRE ON BELMONT STREET

(*Epilogue to "The Tall Men"*)

He was a worthy citizen of the town.
"Where is the fire?" he babbled as he ran.
"The fire! The fire!" spat between pursy breaths.
He dropped his question, stuck his gross right hand
Against his watch-chain, ran, and stared, and sobbed,
Out Belmont Street? My God, that's where I live!
Stumbling with slow fat feet and tragic breath
While roaring sirens passed upon the wind.
And then I heard (what laughter!) blobs of heels
Pecking the night with hurry. Poor staccato,
Dragging a million feeble stumps across
The easy pavements while the flames went up,
Gobbling the roofs and sky. Beneath was earth.
Steady against all shouting, ground was waiting
Forever subtle, old. But walls dissolved
And houses quaked with Fire until I could
Endure no more, but ran, as clamorous

As all the plump mad mob, shouting like them:
"The fire," I cried. What fire? No gables burn,
Nor is that redness some unusual dawn
Sprawled against moonrise, nor a dragon's breath
Spurted from some old sewer you forgot,
Nor ghosts of the Red Men that your fathers knew,
Come back with devil-medicine to bombard
Your bungalows. Choctaw and Cherokee
Lie where the spitting Decherd rifles planted
Under the Tennessee grass, their tired bones.
The fire! What fire? Why, God has come alive
To damn you all, or else the smoke and soot
Have turned back to live coals again for shame
On this gray city, blinded, soiled, and kicked
By fat blind fools. The city's burning up?
Why, good! Then let her burn!
But I'll say more,
Remembering other odds, a narrow place,
A shock of arms, a cry of gables burning,
And there were gathered in that long grim room
Of warriors sixty who called Hnaef their lord,
Who saw the gray wolf creeping in the wood
And heard the grind of linden shields afar;
Surrounded were, yet held the door and died
While the strange light of swords and helmets made
The place like day.
But who will stand tonight,
Holding this other door against the press
Of brazen muscles? Who can conquer wheels
Gigantically rolled with mass of iron
Against frail human fingers? Who can quench
The white-hot fury of the tameless atoms
Bursting the secret jungle of their cells?
Oh, who can stay or ever chain the dull
Gnaw of the fiery smoke, eternally settling
Into the beating heart? There is no fire?
Only, perhaps, the breath of a Southern wind
That I have known too well in many a summer,
Drying the pulse, stopping the weary pulse,
Blowing the faint blood back in the curdled veins
Till there is no way to think of what might be

Better or worse. Yet maybe it were better
Climbing the tallest hill to cry at night:
"Citizens, awake! Fire is upon you, fire
That will not rest, invisible fire that feeds
On your quick brains, your beds, your homes, your steeples,
Fire in your sons' veins and in your daughters',
Fire like a dream of Hell in all your world.
Rush out into the night, take nothing with you,
Only your naked selves, your naked hearts.
Fly from the wrath of fire to the hills
Where water is and the slow peace of time."

There is a place where beech-trees droop their boughs
Down-slanting, and where the dark cedars grow
With stubborn roots threading the lichened rocks.
There the smooth limestone benches, rubbed
By warm primeval streams, yet hold the crystal
Forms of dead life. There on a summer's evening
The screech-owl quavers and unseen July-flies
Trill their thin songs. And there my father said,
Pointing a low mound out to me, "My son,
Stand on this Indian's grave and plainly ask,
Indian, what did you die for? And he'll say,
Nothing!"
So was it! So it is!
What did you die for? Nothing, indeed nothing!
The seed of the white man grows on Indian graves,
Waxing in steel and stone, nursing the fire
That eats and blackens till he has no life
But in the fire that eats him. White man, remember,
Brother, remember Hnaef and his sixty warriors
Greedy for battle-joy. Remember the rifles
Talking men's talk into Tennessee darkness
And the long-haired hunters watching the Tennessee hills
In the land of big rivers for something.

APPLE AND MOLE

For a heavy long time on the long green bough
Hangs the apple of a summer that is shaken
From its flat hot road to its apple-topped hill
With the scraping of a mole that would awaken.

He is under the turf of the long green meadow,
Snuffling under grass and lusty clover
With a sure blunt snout and capable paws
Up the long green slope past the beeches and the haws,
For the summer must be shaken and over.

It's a heavy long time that an apple must hang.
He is butting out a path; he is shoveling a furrow,
Till the tree will be a-quiver, feeling mole at the root,
It is tall, it is green, but he will burrow,

Till the root will be sapless and the twig will be dry,
And the long green bough will be shaken.
The apple is too old, it has worms at the core,
And the long green summer will be green no more.
The apple will fall and not awaken.

F. R. McCREARY

F. (Frederick) R. McCreary was born in Hartford, Connecticut, September 18, 1893, and was educated at the Hartford public schools and Syracuse University. Between 1915 and 1919 McCreary worked at a dozen different occupations from grave-digging to advertising. He neglects the details, saying, "I must admit that I dislike those writers who have had all the plebeian odd jobs that I have—'the pick and shovel poets,' 'Verses by a Postman,' 'The Minstrel of the Cornfields,' etc.—and using it all for publicity."

McCreary made his first definite impression with "Before Winter," a rhapsodic but unrhetorical poem which appeared in *Voices.* It is one of the high moments in his volume, *The Northeast Corner* (1925), a splendidly illuminating set of images bound by an emotional unity. There is not a figure in the poem which is hackneyed nor a single metaphor that is strained. It is a sure, deep-pitched voice which rises from these imaginative lines.

BEFORE WINTER

Long ago
The thunder went talking itself back to the dark hills,
Long ago
The green rows of peas went marching to a tiger lily sunset
While the crickets were sharpening their sickles

For the last of the late August moon.
Now hydrangea breasts hang full and low
To nourish more tenderly
Whatever of sunshine,
And the smell of bruised apples rises from the long rotted grass.

Those who come from the fields
Come with their arms overflowing,
And there sounds from the ripe barns
The restless paw of heavy hoofs,
As the smoky wind and the dusk
Go stabling the horses of summer.

Did autumn come with white lips
Sucking at a black beach where no one could listen?
Did she come in a moment neither night time nor day
Whirling red laughter about her,
Long ribbons of ivy leaves, crimson?
Did you see her a gray-shawled woman of the twilight
Seated in a crotch of the hills,
Supping from a half-empty cup?
Or was she a mother, goldenrod tucked in her hair,
Singing to a sunflower poking his head through the corn?
O whoever she is
And however she came
I love her.

I looked hours and hours
Into long golden wells of Indian summer.
I saw my face at the bottom
And staring, remembering,
I suddenly left them
To look at the moon.

For autumn is the sound of a door softly closing at dusk,
Of an old man's voice
Counting over and again
The bushels he stores in the cellar,
The hush of a mother telling herself and her fire,
"Sarah, Thomas and Kate,
These are my children."

Then the curves of a scythe handle tempted my hands.
I grasped them,
And eagerly
I reaped for the last time.
April, June, and August,
I took what was left
And tied it in bundles for the winter.

The dark mistress of fall
Stands in her bare feet by the barn door
Holding a sickle in her hands.
I have helped her gather red apples,
Filling her apron,
And to slit the throats of fat swine;
I have helped her find the hoes and the rakes
And stacked them in a corner with the plow.
So she stands smiling,
Watching the swirl of the smoke mist,
The slow fall of leaves and the night.

I have helped her, but now I must turn from her, whispering,
"Mothers, knit and knit,
As you watch from your windows
The way of your children, their arms full of leaves,
Swaddling the rose bushes.
Barns, hunch your backs to the north,
For your lady is going with her sickle
To beat on the cool door of the snow wind.
Pools, swallow all the stars that you can,
For the ice will come
And cover you over."

September, October, and November,
They are fearless,
So now while the smolder of leaves in the ditches
With tongues of flame and fire
Utter words of autumn prayer,
Let you, my neighbor, and I,
Go through the silence of the tented evening corn.
Let us light a fire at the edge of the fields and the woodside,
And let us stand round it, watching the leap of the shadows,

Saying over and over to ourselves,
"This is our mother, our sky mother autumn,
Who brings shadows and death all about us,
Who fills our hearts with the glory of dying
And soothes us with the promise of snow."
We thrust our hands into the memory of the night
And grasping the hands of our earth fathers, earth mothers,
They who were loyal,
We stand till the last flare and flicker yields to the darkness,
And the darkness is peace.

SINCE CHRISTMAS

These evenings since the Child was born
Strange shadows nudge the roadside thorn,
Strange lanterns light old windows up
Where alien mouths have come to sup.

Since Christmas time when God touched man,
When the ice reached deep and the snow began,
The weathercock at twilight feels
A strange wind snatch at his golden heels.

The fences tramp the fields all night
To keep the winter whole and white,
But round each door at dawn's grim stare
Are tracks of doubt that have trespassed there.

Now the young men watch the new flame climb
From candles fat with unburned time,
But the old men listen with twitching cheeks
Each time the uneasy wind-vane speaks.

ROBERT NATHAN

Robert Nathan was born in New York City, January 2, 1894. He was educated at private schools there and in Switzerland, completing his studies at Harvard.

His first book, *Peter Kindred* (1919), was a mildly interesting novel which was succeeded by the far more original *Autumn* in 1921. The delicately tinted prose as well as the interpolated rhymes revealed the fact that Nathan was a poet in disguise, so it was no shock to his admirers when *Youth Grows Old*, a collection of verses, appeared within a few months after his successful prose. Although there is variety in these fifty pages, it is the mood of restrained melancholy which Nathan best reproduces. But even the lightest of his stanzas is saved from sentimentality by an ironically lifted eyebrow. As a sequence *Youth Grows Old* (1922) suffers from being pitched in too low a key; as individual songs there is no denying the charm of the lyrics, manifestly the work of one who is a composer as well as an author.

The Puppet Master (1923), *Jonah* (1925), *The Bishop's Wife* (1928) continue the strain of gentle resignation spiced with satire.

A Cedar Box (1929) lacks force and its few pages proceed at a gait that is over-leisurely. Nathan, in spite of his comparative youth, is not a "modernist"; there are no experiments or departures here. There is, on the other hand, a little sadness, a little shrugging whimsicality, and not a little wisdom. Gentle is the adjective most often applied to his books, but the connotations are misleading. Nathan is gentle as a surgeon is gentle, as an analyst is gentle when depths are being probed. More original sonnets have been written by poets of his generation; but, unconcerned with originality, Nathan restates traditional themes and, by the serenity of his utterance, accomplishes that delightful miracle which lifts platitude into poetry. "There is a peace that I have made my own," he writes, and that half-tired, half-triumphant peacefulness emanates from all his work.

AT THE SYMPHONY

(*César Franck, D Minor*)

The 'cellos, setting forth apart,
Grumbled and sang, and so the day
From the low beaches of my heart
Turned in tranquillity away.

And over weariness and doubt
Rose up the horns like bellied sails,
Like canvas of the soul flung out
To rising and orchestral gales;

Passed on and left irresolute
The ebony, the silver throat . . .

Low over clarinet and flute
Hung heaven upon a single note.

"WHEN IN THE CROWD I SUDDENLY BEHOLD"

When in the crowd I suddenly behold
  Your small, proud head, so like a queen for grace,
Bearing its weight of spun and twisted gold
  Like an old crown on an imperial face;
When through the chime of gossip and the cries,
  I meet your glance, amused, serene, and bright
With some small secret, and behold your eyes
  Leap into laughter and immediate light,
Then as a bird might hear repeated over
  (His own song done) the same familiar part
From distant boughs and from the absent lover,
  And with that single beauty fill his heart,
I hear all other sounds, all other words,
Dwindle to silence like the sound of birds.

"I RIDE THE GREAT BLACK HORSES OF MY HEART"

I ride the great black horses of my heart
  With reins of steel across their flying hair;
So slow are they to halt, so swift to start,
  The stormy-breasted stallions of despair.
Dark as the night and fretful as the air,
  Fleeter than hounds that go with bellies thinned—
My wrists of all their strength have none to spare
  When those black hunters lean upon the wind.
What if the sudden thunder of their feet
  Wakes like a dream some farmer from his rest?
Dreams had I too, farmer, before these fleet
  Steeds of the night had broken from their nest.
Their weary flanks are green and white with foam.
Sleep, brother, sleep; I bring my horses home.

"BECAUSE MY GRIEF SEEMS QUIET AND APART"

Because my grief seems quiet and apart,
  Think not for such a reason it is less.
True sorrow makes a silence in the heart,
  Joy has its friends, but grief its loneliness.

The wound that tears too readily to confess,
   Can mended be, by fortune or by art,
But there are woes no medicine can dress,
   As there are wounds that from the spirit start.
So do not wonder that I do not weep,
   Or say my anguish is too little shown.
There is a quiet here, there is a sleep,
   There is a peace that I have made my own.
Man by himself goes down into the deep,
   Certain and unbefriended, and alone.

MARK VAN DOREN

Mark Van Doren was born at Hope, Illinois, June 13, 1894, and was educated at the University of Illinois and at Columbia. He taught English at Columbia, and became literary editor of *The Nation*, for which weekly he reviewed most of the poetry after 1920. (His brother, Carl Van Doren, had been his predecessor as literary editor on the same weekly.)

Besides his verses, he has published four volumes of criticism: *Henry David Thoreau, A Critical Study* (1916) and *The Poetry of John Dryden* (1920), being the best of his analytical appraisals. He took upon himself the huge labor of editing *An Anthology of World Poetry* (1928), which assembles the world's best poetry in the best English versions.

Spring Thunder and Other Poems appeared in 1924. A casual glance through its pages reveals the fact that Van Doren has been influenced by Robert Frost. He, too, writes of homely bucolic things: pastorals on water wheels which need mending, a mountain house in December, the coming of alfalfa, river snow, and dry meadows. His emotion, like Frost's, is restrained. But if neither his subjects nor his point of view are particularly individualized, his mellowness is his own, and the spirit which moves beneath the smooth contours of his verse personifies even the simplest of his quatrains.

Now the Sky (1928) reveals Van Doren as a definitely metaphysical poet. He is still concerned with ferns, dark barns, deserted hollows, but he grows more and more preoccupied with "the crumbling away of former bright edges of courage and causeless decay." He sits in a circle of maples, feeling the cosmic pulse, wondering how long men have watched Arcturus, hearing waves "of an old awareness," underground wisdom—and so "to the sun again, and the fever of learning." Van Doren's material is ordinary enough and his method needs no prolonged analysis. But his touch is fine and his sensibility pronounced in lines that are casual but never commonplace.

FORMER BARN LOT

Once there was a fence here,
And the grass came and tried—
Leaning from the pasture—
To get inside.

But colt feet trampled it,
Turning it brown;
Until the farmer moved
And the fence fell down;

Then any bird saw,
Under the wire,
Grass nibbling inward
Like green fire.

IMMORTAL

The last thin acre of stalks that stood
Was never the end of the wheat.
Always something fled to the wood,
As if the field had feet.

In front of the sickle something rose—
Mouse, or weasel, or hare;
We struck and struck, but our worst blows
Dangled in the air.

Nothing could touch the little soul
Of the grain. It ran to cover,
And nobody knew in what warm hole
It slept till the winter was over,

And early seeds lay cold in the ground.
Then—but nobody saw—
It burrowed back with never a sound,
And awoke the thaw.

THE PULSE

One thing is sure
When most are not:
That there is cold,
That there is hot,

That winter stars
Are swollen blue
And that bright summer
Bulges too—

Getting the same
Black sky with child;
And both are big,
And both are wild.

There is no error
In the frost;
With warmth away
No warmth is lost;

Waves are coming
Of a time
That has been written
In slow rhyme:

Hot and cold,
And cold and hot—
All things may fail,
But this one not.

Though hate and love
And mercy cease,
Under the rippling
Vapor-fleece

Of earth goes warmth
Pursuing cold
And neither is young,
And neither is old.

THE DISTANT RUNNERS

Six great horses of Spain, set free after his death by De Soto's men, ran West and restored to America the wild race lost there some thousands of years ago.
—A legend.

Ferdinand De Soto lies
Soft again in river mud.
Birds again, as on the day
Of his descending, rise and go
Straightly West, and do not know
Of feet beneath that faintly thud.

If I were there in other time,
Between the proper sky and stream;
If I were there and saw the six
Abandoned manes, and ran along,
I could sing the fetlock song
That now is chilled within a dream.

Ferdinand De Soto, sleeping
In the river, never heard
Four-and-twenty Spanish hooves
Fling off their iron and cut the green,
Leaving circles new and clean
While overhead the wing-tips whirred.

Neither I nor any walker
By the Mississippi now
Can see the dozen nostrils open
Half in pain for death of men—
But half in gladness, neighing then
As loud as loping would allow.

On they rippled, tail and back,
A prairie day, and swallows knew
A dark, uneven current there.
But not a sound came up the wind,
And toward the night their shadow thinned
Before the black that flooded through.

If I were there to bend and look,
The sky would know them as they sped
And turn to see. But I am here,
And they are far, and time is old.
Within my dream the grass is cold;
The legs are locked; the sky is dead.

THE ESCAPE

Going from us at last,
He gave himself forever
Unto the mudded nest,
Unto the dog and the beaver.

Sick of the way we stood,
He pondered upon flying,
Or envied the triple thud
Of horses' hooves; whose neighing

Came to him sweeter than talk,
Whereof he too was tired.
No silences now he broke,
No emptiness explored.

Going from us, he never
Sent one syllable home.
We called him wild; but the plover
Watched him, and was tame.

RAYMOND HOLDEN

Raymond Holden was born in New York City in 1894 and educated at Princeton. He was, after several years of free-lancing, managing editor of *Travel Magazine* from 1923 to 1925.

His first volume, *Granite and Alabaster* (1922), is full of intellectual strength; even the lyrics have philosophic undertones. But Holden's is no mere versified celebration. His poetry accomplishes a fusion of the scientific fact and its romantic associations, of the thing seen and the thing imagined. It is New England which Holden projects in this volume—a world of questioning skies and ghostly retrospects, of brooding uncertainties and somber speculations. This "wind-walled quietness," this freighting of lyrics with oblique philosophy, recalls the work of Robert Frost, to whom Holden is obviously indebted. There are moments when it is Frost's rather than Holden's voice which is heard in these poems. But, except for half a dozen pages, Holden maintains himself even when he is most under the spell of his teacher. His intonation falters, but not his intensity.

The work which Holden has published subsequent to *Granite and Alabaster* is less reminiscent of Frost. The ideas as well as the technique are tenser and he has shaken himself free of idiomatic mimicry. "Winter Among the Days," "Geese in the Running Water," and "Dead Morning," combine cool projection with warm sensuousness. "Dead Morning" is as strange and powerful a love-poem as has been written in this generation; "Proud, Unhoped-For Light," a still later poem, has the same personal outcry beneath objective reticence.

Besides being a poet, Holden has written prose of no mean value. Turning biographer for the nonce, he published *Abraham Lincoln* (1929) which, though not to be compared with Sandburg's work, is interesting for Holden's picture of the frontier-politician period and the slow growth of the man into the myth.

DEAD MORNING

When sleep, the supposed guardian,
That had its hands upon my eyes,
Dissolved in moistened light and ran
Among the grasses, water-wise,
I saw above my head a sun
And near me, in a breathless oak,
Two bitter crows and on a stone
A third, wing-deep in silver smoke.
I suddenly knew that this was death
And burial in bodiless air,
And that I should not feel your breath
Against my throat, nor have your hair
Pile at my cheek its sea-sweet smell,
Nor have your body's dolphin length
Balance its curve against my strength.
I knew that I had waked in hell.

GEESE IN THE RUNNING WATER

The geese in the running water, among the snowy stones,
Matching their feet with the geese in the mirror brook,
Stand preening, ruffling the feathers that grow on their hollow
bones,
And a man stares from the field with the slowness of sleep in
his look.

The arm of the rising dawn, flung over the eastern cloud,
The coming of day which none were sure would come back,
Caught in the eddies among the wide feet of the proud,
Spreads its deep change of light on the changing shallow of
black.

The grave, web-footed birds look down at their images,
At the five white-breasted geese left in the ebb of the shadow.
Time that was hurrying over is torn by the crowns of the trees
And thrown to the ground at the feet of the man who crosses
the meadow.

WINTER AMONG THE DAYS

O flavorless white hour
That like a drift of snow
Has cold tongues to devour
The warmth of mind we know,
How shall man take his rest
Between your surfaces?
Blood goes thin in the breast
And pride is on its knees.
He must lie, taking tally,
On an unfriendly bed,
Of days continually
Leaping with hoof and head,
Falling with many a bleat
Back to their level flock
As if their heart-shaped feet
Could shake the iron rock.

This winter-crackled doze
Watching ram after ewe
Is all the sleep man knows,
The sleep that must renew
The mind which like a hand
Holds the mere body hung
Upon another land
Older than this, yet young.

PROUD, UNHOPED-FOR LIGHT

"Because, because," the sound of the hard road said
Stepping up into my brain as I went downhill.
But it was only a sound that shook in my head
And the tongue of my mouth let the cold bright air be still.

Out of the pasture, rotten with apples, the cows
Swung their smooth necks, moving as if they swam.
The breath of the thin light parted the apple boughs
And ruffled the flanks of the filly and her dam.

There was no answer to be spoken and no need
To cry out through the quietness to ask and protest.
The proud, unhoped-for light, without fear or heed,
Eager and kind, lay down with the heart in my breast.

JEAN TOOMER

Jean Toomer was born in 1894, in Washington, D. C., received his education in the public schools, taught for a time and made his first impression as a writer in the more experimental magazines.

Cane (1923) is a rhapsodic volume, which, in spite of traces of Sherwood Anderson and the distinct influence of Waldo Frank, reveals a discriminating idiom. Toomer is especially adept in effects of repetition and balance, as is evident in so subtle a lyric as "Song of the Son." Even his prose has this balanced rise and fall; a short story, "Fern"—reprinted in Calverton's *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* (1929)—being not merely an intensified narrative but a prose lyric.

SONG OF THE SON

Pour, O pour that parting soul in song,
O pour it in the sawdust glow of night,
Into the velvet pine-smoke air tonight,
And let the valley carry it along,
And let the valley carry it along.

O land and soil, red soil and sweet-gum tree,
So scant of grass, so profligate of pines,
Now just before an epoch's sun declines,
Thy son, in time, I have returned to thee,
Thy son, I have, in time, returned to thee.

In time, for though the sun is setting on
A song-lit race of slaves, it has not set;
Though late, O soil, it is not too late yet
To catch thy plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone,
Leaving, to catch thy plaintive soul soon gone.

O Negro slaves, dark purple ripened plums,
Squeezed, and bursting in the pine-wood air,
Passing, before they stripped the old tree bare
One plum was saved for me, one seed becomes

An everlasting song, a singing tree,
Caroling softly souls of slavery,
What they were, and what they are to me,
Caroling softly souls of slavery.

H. PHELPS PUTNAM

H. Phelps Putnam was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1894. After the usual public school education, he attended Phillips Exeter Academy and Yale College. Reacting from academic education, he worked in an Arizona copper mine, in Washington as a government historian, in the importing business in New York, and as an editorial assistant in Boston. In 1923, he left the latter position to spend the year in Provence. Returning to America, he endeavored to make a serious profession out of what was a serious avocation, his first book, *Trinc*, appearing in 1927.

Trinc is sharply divided by its two sections. The first ("Green

Wine") is straightforward and lyrical, a set of frankly youthful reactions. The second half ("Brandy") is built about an impressionistic structure in which myth and modernity combine. The symbols used by Phelps are archaic, but the expression is distinctly of the moment. His method is similarly contradictory, being alternately oblique and abruptly four-square. Thus his chief effect is achieved by esthetic shock, a device which Phelps frequently overdoes.

> "I travel brokenly, and I shall know,
> With Hermes and the alchemists—but, hell,
> What use is it talking that way to you?
> Hard-boiled, unbroken egg, what can you care
> For the enfolded passion of the Rose?"

Such incongruities are thrown across his pages until his transitions seem like the mere turn of a trick. But if, as Allen Tate wrote, "his attitude springs, in part, from the current romanticism of the 'hard-boiled,' the main feature of which is the worship of the crude, the barbaric, the 'un-intellectual,' " his Bill Williams, Hasbrouck, Jack Chance are figures in a new cosmogony. These heroes, presenting a latter-day scorn of the intelligence, are usually drunk (*Trinc,* according to Panurge, being "a Panomphean Word, signifying Drink") and always rugged; nevertheless—again by the contradiction of the author's spirit—their disintegrated sensitivities move in an undoubted atmosphere of poetry.

"Ballad of a Strange Thing" is such a poem. Translating Daphne from Thessaly to the township of Pollard Mill and Apollo into a bawdy harvester, Putnam accomplishes something more than surprise. In what is one of the most interesting of contemporary ballads, he makes an old myth immediate and gives backwoods-America a nimbus of antique legend.

BALLAD OF A STRANGE THING[1]

His name was Chance, Jack Chance, he said,
And that his family was dead.
He was a lucid fool, his eyes
Were cool and he beyond surprise.
Into the township Pollard Mill
He came in autumn alone one day,
Loafing along those roads which still,
Though dying in the grass, report
That lumber-sledges went that way.

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[1] It may be rewarding to compare this treatment of a myth with Elizabeth Madox Roberts' use of a similar theme in "Orpheus," page 423.

He came idly and in our town
He raised a flight of birds, a brown
And silver flock, and underneath
Their wings were tinged with gold; his breath
Blew and the birds dipped and rose
As if they surely lived which were
But lies of the calm sorcerer.

Autumn came bringing free
Melancholy, but to me
Brought Jack, when I was sitting there
In the open barn door-way where
The sun moved in and I could get,
Drifting by, the sound and smell
Of late bees and of mignonette
From the dying garden by the wall,
And hear the thin defeated bell
Of distant time, and see the tall
Elms beyond the orchard slopes
Rising improbably, like hopes
Swaying above the mind, and I
Was sitting there and he came by.
Under his hat I saw his eyes
Measuring without disguise
The ripeness of my house,
And measuring myself, and he
Turned in, approached and spoke to me.
He had decided undismayed
This was the place for Chance, and I
The boy for him; and so he stayed.

And then the days moved gravely by,
Time drowned in fluent clarity
Flowing between him and me,
Who only lay along the walls
Unashamed of indolence, and heard
The dusty harvesters' harsh calls
To sweating teams, loading the sheaves
On the steep withered fields—their care
Was none of ours; or reasoned there
Where the mill-pond burned with leaves

And rustled at the dam, on those
Stark thoughts that rose
Out of cool spoken words, or we
Loafing in the arbor ate
Slowly the warm grapes, the rusty
Creaking swallows skimmed
The long ridgepoles, the day grew late
Easily, and dimmed.

At night we made a fire to mark
A spot of mirth against the dark,
There in a pasture which lay high
On the nearness of the sky.
Other countrymen would come,
Young farmers, farmers' men, and sons,
One after one they learned to come
And laugh with Chance and tap the old
Keg of cider, acrid gold,
Which we had borne carefully
Out of the cellar where it lay,
Drowsing wickedly it lay
Waiting for us to set free
Its vigor and its treachery.
Then Jack would sing his bawdy songs:
That old ballad which belongs
To timelessness, *The Bastard King*,
Or *Doctor Tanner*, or *Mademoiselle,*
Or *Lil* who died of lechering.
She died with her boots on, as they tell,
With a champion lad between her knees.
Or he would sometimes please,
If drinking brought delusion near,
To tell corrosive tales, the mere
Garments of lies, the cunning kind
Which echo somewhat in the mind,
And then they go, and you are more
Dull and baffled than before.

There went by then, in such a way,
Serene October; the last day
Came and the night was newly cold.
But the fire was high and the old

Cider burned within and we,
A dozen foolish farmers, kept
Alive the late hilarity
Of autumn, and the township slept.
Then Chance arose from where he sat
Against the keg and cocked his hat
Sideways and, walking slow around
The fire, said—"I have always found
Nothing new among much change;
But this I tell you now is strange:

It was at noon, the hour of sleep
For those who use their nights
In the deluding piracy
Of shadowy delights.

And so I slept, above the bank
Above the River Still,
Under an oak, the least of two
That rose under the hill.

But a sound crept through my nerves
And I woke and I could hear
Feet running fast and close,
Down the hill and near,

Then stop; and heard a noise like sobs
And stood up quietly
And peering saw that a breathless girl
Was clutching the other tree.

And then a man came following,
Loping leisurely,
And when he stood beside her said,
'I knew you would wait for me.'

And then she turned at bay; she was
Astonishingly rare,
A young ascetic fury she
Was something almost strange to me
With her honey fallen hair.

'Yes—and have waited even too long,
Before now, to be glad,
Watching your insolence too long—
Oh, you were the gorgeous lad
With your dark lovely face and all
The women you have had.

I have seen the rabbits follow you
Unasked and eagerly;
O ladies, you should see him now,
Begging a kiss of me.'

She ceased, and we all three were still
While he admired her,
And I kept hidden watching them,
For I have that character.

He did not mock her when he spoke,
'Where do they get these dull
Flash melodramas in their skulls?
And such a dainty skull.

Listen, I keep no list of names
For vanity; and I
Dislike the names and odors and ways
Of women; I am shy
Of their domestic wills; and I
Am tired of the melting lie.

But there you are—and sometimes love
Is more than remembered skill.'
'Love,' she said, 'is the rust which ate
The clean rancor of my will.'

He raised his quiet hand to touch
Her hair, but she
Turned sharply down the bank and he
Now followed instantly.

And there below the godly stream
Was whispering in its beard,
And she cried, 'Save me, River Still!'
Then stepped and disappeared.

Well—so far nothing strange;
But after that the queer
Began, and I have seen these things,
And I, the bastard son of change,
Would dare to call them queer.

I saw the girl had gone entirely,
And in her place a dry
Shivering graceful sheaf of reeds
Sprang up, suddenly high;

And that he, following so close
That her hair was in his face,
Clutched and had no girl but had
Sharp reeds in his embrace.

He stepped back, looking at his hands
All laced with blood; a spike
Broke short and stood between his ribs
Most murderous like.

This feller was not eager now,
But only dazed,
And pulled the wet spike from his side,
Fumbling and amazed.

He stooped slowly to bathe his hands,
Then from his pocket drew
A folded knife and cut one reed,
Murmuring, 'This will do.

Sometimes there's music in these girls,
Sometimes,' and sitting then
He made a whistle which he tried
And changed and tried again.

He blew five even notes and stopped,
But the sound rippled away
Slowly, as if a sweet clang came
From the leaves and hummed away.

And then there came along the bank
A black majestic goat
With yellow eyes and gilded horns
And a white beard at its throat.

The goat lay down before his feet
Respectfully, dipping its head,
And the man laughed and, 'Can this be
A messenger?' he said.

And played again and now more wild
And cloudily intricate,
And the goat arose and danced like one
Hieratic and sedate.

And that is all," said Chance, and then
He said, "So long," and walked away
Casually, as if the night were day.
And we jumped up calling, and then
Stood silent for over us coldly fell
Five piercing notes, each like a spark;
We stood there stiffly and immersed,
Hearing laughter in the dark,
Until I spoke, being the first,
"We had better go home now to bed;
We have drunk too much," I said.

Thereafter the rains beat down
The autumn, the drenched leaves came down
From the black trees, choking the ditches,
And over the sea came sons-of-bitches
With a hollow quarrel, the talking rats
Of England and of Europe slithered
Down the hawsers, doffed their hats
And squealed; and the plague spread and came,
Taking the cleanly name
Of honor for its strange device,
Even to our town; the conscript lice
Played soldiers over Pollard Mill
And pitched their camp on the River Still;
But no more Jack, and we were more
Dull and baffled than before.

ABOUT WOMEN

Fair golden thoughts and lovely words—
Away, away from her they call,
For women are the silly birds,
And perching on a sunny wall
They chirp the answer and the all;
They hold for true all futile things—
Life, death, and even love—they fall
To dreaming over jeweled rings.

Their bodies are uncouthly made,
And heavy swollen like a pear,
And yet their conquered, undismayed
And childish lovers call them fair.
Their honor fills them full of care,
Their honor that is nothingness,
The mystery of empty air,
The veil of vain delightfulness.

Their subtleties are thin and pale,
Their hearts betray them in their eyes:
They are a simple flute, and frail,
With triple stops for playing lies.
These poor machines of life are wise
To scorn the metaphysic glow,
The careless game that laughs and dies,
The heady grace they cannot know.

Well, give them kisses, scatter flowers,
And whisper that you cannot stay;
We shall have clarity and hours
Which women shall not take away.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

Genevieve Taggard was born November 28, 1894, on an apple farm at Waitsburg, Washington. At the age of two she was taken by her parents to Hawaii, where she remained, with one brief interval, for the next eighteen years. She attended the University of California, edited the college literary magazine, and graduated in 1919. Two years later, in New York, with a group of other poets, she helped found *The Measure*, that journal of poetry which was particularly hospitable to the modern lyric.

Her first volume, *For Eager Lovers*, was published in 1922. In spite of the banal title, Miss Taggard's lines are unaffected and her general statements have almost personal definiteness. It is always a sensitive artist—and a woman—speaking through such melodies as "The Enamel Girl," and "With Child," a difficult motif and a treatment which is both firm and delicate. The glitter of "Ice Age" and the hurt beauty of "Unacknowledged Dedications" are almost equally successful.

Hawaiian Hilltop, a leaflet of poems about her childhood in the tropics, was published in 1923. It proved that Miss Taggard was at her best in the more extended lyric; such a poem as "Solar Myth" is more vivid, more richly delineated than the best of her shorter melodies.

Words for the Chisel (1926) was notable for the long narrative "Poppy Juice" which opened the volume. Less comment was accorded the finer lyrics in which Miss Taggard had acquired a style both subtle and colloquial. No poet could be more self-critical than was Miss Taggard, for two years later she made a selection from her three previously published volumes and, after ten years' work, retained exactly twenty-eight poems for *Travelling Standing Still* (1928). The title is far more fortunate than the one immediately preceding it in date of publication, for Miss Taggard's manner is far from stony. There is, it is true, a hardness here, but it is the tensity of emotion, not the toughness of a metallic technique. Such poems as "With Child," and "Dilemma of the Elm" proceed from experiences which are common and yet climacteric. "Doomsday Morning" and "On the Properties of Nature for Healing an Illness" (not published in any of her volumes) are products of an imagination schooled by intellectual sobriety. The scrupulous care with which she has selected her most important volume, shows in these as in the simplest of Miss Taggard's verses.

Circumference, a collection exhibiting "varieties of metaphysical verse" from Donne to E. E. Cummings, was edited by Miss Taggard and published in a distinguished format in 1930.

WITH CHILD

Now I am slow and placid, fond of sun,
Like a sleek beast, or a worn one:

No slim and languid girl—not glad
With the windy trip I once had,
But velvet-footed, musing of my own,
Torpid, mellow, stupid as a stone.

You cleft me with your beauty's pulse, and now
Your pulse has taken body. Care not how
The old grace goes, how heavy I am grown,
Big with this loneliness, how you alone
Ponder our love. Touch my feet and feel
How earth tingles, teeming at my heel!
Earth's urge, not mine—my little death, not hers;
And the pure beauty yearns and stirs.

It does not heed our ecstasies, it turns
With secrets of its own, its own concerns,
Toward a windy world of its own, toward stark
And solitary places. In the dark,
Defiant even now, it tugs and moans
To be untangled from these mother's bones.

THE ENAMEL GIRL

Fearful of beauty, I always went
Timidly indifferent:

Dainty, hesitant, taking in
Just what was tiniest and thin;

Careful not to care
For burning beauty in blue air;

Wanting what my hand could touch—
That not too much;

Looking not to left or right
On a honey-silent night;

Fond of arts and trinkets, if
Imperishable and stiff.

They never played me false, nor fell
Into fine dust. They lasted well.

They lasted till you came, and then
When you went, sufficed again.

But for you, they had been quite
All I needed for my sight.

You faded. I never knew
How to unfold as flowers do,

Or how to nourish anything
To make it grow. I wound a wing

With one caress; with one kiss
Break most fragile ecstasies . . .

Now terror touches me when I
Dream I am touching a butterfly.

SOLAR MYTH

(Maui, the dutiful son and great hero, yields to his mother's entreaty and adjusts the center of the universe to her convenience. The days are too short for drying tapa. He is persuaded to slow down the speed of the spider-sun with a lasso of sisal rope.)

The golden spider of the sky
Leaped from the crater's rim;
And all the winds of morning rose
And spread, and followed him.

The circle of the day swept out,
His vast and splendid path;
The purple sea spumed in the west
His humid evening bath.

Thrice twenty mighty legs he had,
And over earth there passed
Shadows daily whipping by,
Faster, faster, fast . . .

For daily did he wax more swift,
And daily did he run
The span of heaven to the sea,
A lusty, rebel sun.

Then Maui's mother came to him
With weight of household woes:
"I cannot get my tapa dry
Before the daylight goes.

"Mornings I rise and spread with care
My tapa on the grass;
Evenings I gather it again,
A damp and sodden mass."

Then Maui rose and climbed at night
The mountain. Dim and deep
Within the crater's bowl he saw
The sprawling sun asleep.

He looped his ropes, the mighty man,
He whirled his sisal cords;
They whistled like a hurricane
And cut the air like swords.

Up sprang the spider. Maui hurled
His lasso after him.
The spider fled. Great Maui stood
Firm on the mountain-rim.

The spider dipped and swerved and pulled,
But struggle as he might,
Around one-half his whirl of legs
The sisal ropes cut tight.

He broke them off, the mighty man,
He dropped them in the sea,
Where there had once been sixty legs
There now were thirty-three.

Maui counted them, and took
The pathway home; and came
Back to his mother, brooding,—strode
Like a lost man, and lame.

The tarnished spider of the sky
Limped slowly over heaven,
And with his going mourned and moaned
The missing twenty-seven.

On with a hollow voice he mourned,
Poured out his hollow woe;
Over, each day the sound of him
Bellowing, went below.

Maui saw the gulls swarm up
And scream and settle on
The carcass of the limping thing
That once had been the sun.

But still he thought at length to have
His mother satisfied.
"Can't you put back his legs again
Now all my tapa's dried?"

"The days are long and dull," she said,
"I loved to see them skim." . . .
Wearily the old sun shook
The black birds off of him.

DOOMSDAY MORNING

Deaf to God, who calls and walks
Until the earth aches with his tread
Summoning the sulky dead,
We'll wedge and stiffen under rocks
Or be mistaken for a stone,
And signal as children do, "Lie low,"
Wait and wait for God to go.

The risen will think we slumber on
Like slug-a-beds. When they have gone
Trouped up before the Judgment Throne
We in the vacant earth, alone,—
Abandoned by ambitious souls,
And deaf to God, who calls and walks

Like an engine overhead
Driving the disheveled dead,—
We will rise and crack the ground,
Tear the roots and heave the rocks,
And billow the surface where God walks,
And God will listen to the sound
And know that lovers are below
Working havoc, till they creep
Together, from their sundered sleep.

Then end, world! Let your final darkness fall!
And God may call . . . and call . . . and call.

ON THE PROPERTIES OF NATURE FOR HEALING AN ILLNESS

Try tropic for your balm,
Try storm,
And after storm, calm.
Try snow of heaven, heavy, soft, and slow,
Brilliant and warm.
Nothing will help, and nothing do much harm.

Drink iron from rare springs; follow the sun;
Go far
To get the beam of some medicinal star;
Or in your anguish run
The gauntlet of all zones to an ultimate one.
Fever and chill
Punish you still,
Earth has no zone to work against your will.

Burn in the jeweled desert with the toad.
Catch lace
In evening mist across your haunted face;
Or walk in upper air the slanted road.
It will not lift that load;
Nor will large seas undo your subtle ill.

Nothing can cure and nothing kill
What ails your eyes, what cuts your pulse in two,
And not kill you.

DILEMMA OF THE ELM

In summer elms are made for me.
I walk ignoring them and they
Ignore my walking in a way
I like in any elegant tree.

Fountain of the elm is shape
For something I have felt and said. . . .
In winter to hear the lonely scrape
Of rooty branches overhead

Should make me only half believe
An elm had ever a frond of green—
Faced by the absence of a leaf
Forget the fair elms I have seen.

(A wiry fountain, black upon
The little landscape, pale-blue with snow—
Elm of my summer, obscurely gone
To leave me another elm to know.)

Instead, I paint it with my thought,
Not knowing, hardly, that I do;
The elm comes back I had forgot
I see it green, absurdly new,

Grotesquely growing in the snow.
In winter an elm's a double tree;
In winter all elms trouble me.

But in summer elms are made for me.
I can ignore the way they grow.

MARJORIE MEEKER

Marjorie Meeker was born in Bradford, England, while her father was there as American consul. She came to the States when about five years old and was educated in this country. Since her childhood, she has spent much of her time traveling in Europe and has lived alternately in New York and Ohio.

Although Marjorie Meeker is not a prolific writer, whatever she prints has a quiet distinction. While still a neophyte (the Young Poet's Prize, offered through *Poetry*, was awarded to her in 1924), she exhibited none of the fluttering syllables affected by many of her contemporaries; instead of pretty agitations, she presented a stripped clarity. Whether she writes a memorial sonnet on the tragic death of her brother, a lyric prayer, or a love song, her lines capture a strength which is no less steely for being supple.

Color of Water (1928) has a heightened music. Somewhat influenced by Elinor Wylie and the modern metaphysical poets, Marjorie Meeker unpretentiously builds suspensions of "cool imperious words" and phrases no darker than the color of water.

WHERE MY STEP FALTERS

Where my step falters,
  My fathers trod;
But I raze their altars,
  For my God,

At whose cruel
  Thrust I am learning—
I am fuel
  For his burning.

My brain is humming,
  My heart is dusk
With awe at his coming.
  I am the husk

Cast away
  For his leaping higher;
I am the gray
  Ash of his fire.

No one knows,
  And little it matters
Where the husk blows
  Or the ash scatters.

MEMORIAL SONNET

By many a saint and many a scholar led,
I devised dreams where death was so assailed
That grief became a source where beauty fed.
My dear, my dear . . . the reasoned dream has failed.
Let nobler hearts, or those who loved you less,
Become with sorrow beautiful and wise;
I only know, upon your nothingness
I stare with cold uncomprehending eyes.
Love cannot glorify the loss of love,
Nor loneliness exalt an empty room,
Nor any gracious solace lift above
The cold ironic shadow of a tomb
Whose simple breadth no fire of faith can span
By any pledge of any God or man.

BABETTE DEUTSCH

Babette Deutsch was born September 22, 1895, in New York City. She received her B.A. at Barnard College in 1917, doing subsequent work at the New School for Social Research.

Banners (1919) has a rich emotional content, the expression of a high-strung, apperceptive nature. *Honey Out of the Rock* (1925) is a less unified but scarcely less sensitive volume; few of the pages lack the eager seriousness which characterizes Miss Deutsch's writing.

In collaboration with her husband, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, she has published two anthologies: *Modern Russian Poetry* (1921) and *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923). Her novels, *In Such a Night* (1927) and *A Brittle Heaven* (1926), are more mannered and straining than her verse.

Fire for the Night (1930), though her smallest volume, is by far her best. Intellect dominates, but emotion is by no means absent. Among the outstanding poems are "Interim," the sonnet sequence "Time and Spirit," and "Thoughts at the Year's End," which won *The Nation's* poetry prize for 1926.

THE DEATH OF A CHILD

Are you at ease now,
Do you suck content

From death's dark nipple between your wan lips?
Now that the fever of the day is spent
And anguish slips
From the small limbs,
And they lie lapped in rest,
The young head pillowed soft upon that indurate breast.
No, you are quiet,
And forever,
Tho for us the silence is so loud with tears,
Wherein we hear the dreadful-footed years
Echoing, but your quick laughter never,
Never your stumbling run, your sudden face
Thrust in bright scorn upon our solemn fears.
Now the dark mother holds you close. . . . O, you
We loved so,
How you lie,
So strangely still, unmoved so utterly
Dear yet, but, oh, a little alien too.

IN A MUSEUM

Here stillness sounds like echoes in a tomb.
The light falls cold upon these antique toys
Whereby men sought to turn the scales of doom:
Jade gods, a ritual of rigid boys.
Warm blood was spent for this unwindowed stone
Tinct with the painted pleasures of the dead;
For secrets of unwithering flesh and bone—
With these old Egypt's night was comforted.

We lean upon the glass, our curious eyes
Staring at death, three thousand years remote.
And vanity, the worm that never dies,
Feeds on your silver ring and Pharaoh's coat.
And are these heartbeats, then, less perilous?
Since death is close, and death is death for us.

ALTER BRODY

Alter Brody was born at Kartúshkiya-Beróza, Province of Grodno, Russia, November 1, 1895. He came to New York City at the age of eight and, after a cursory schooling, wrote translations for Jewish and American newspapers. His first poems appeared in *The Seven Arts* in 1916-17.

In *A Family Album* (1918) one sees the impress of a tense and original mind, of imagination fed by strengthening fact, of sight sharpened by insight. Many of Brody's lines are uncouth and awkward; what music he achieves is fortuitous. Yet his pages are filled with picturesque honesty and uncompromising tenderness. Much of this work is an interpretation of the modern world against a background of old dreams: young America seen through the eyes of old Russia.

Lamentations (1928) is a collection of Jewish-American folk-plays. Taking his material from the tenements, the delicatessen stores, the pushcart-crowded streets, Brody has enriched folk literature with a new localism.

A CITY PARK

Timidly
Against a background of brick tenements
Some trees spread their branches
Skyward.
They are thin and sapless,
They are bent and weary—
Tamed with captivity;
And they huddle behind the fence
Swaying helplessly before the wind,
Forward and backward,
Like a group of panicky deer
Caught in a cage.

GHETTO TWILIGHT

An infinite weariness comes into the faces of the old tenements,
As they stand massed together on the block,
Tall and thoughtfully silent,
In the enveloping twilight.
Pensively,
They eye each other across the street,
Through their dim windows—
With a sad recognizing stare;
Watching the red glow fading in the distance,

At the end of the street
Behind the black church spires;
Watching the vague sky lowering overhead,
Purple with clouds of colored smoke
From the extinguished sunset;
Watching the tired faces coming home from work—
Like dry-breasted hags
Welcoming their children to their withered arms.

E. MERRILL ROOT

E. Merrill Root was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1895. He spent most of his life, however, in New England, attending Amherst College, where he studied under Robert Frost. He was one of the editors of *The Measure* and a teacher and lecturer at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

Lost Eden (1927) and *Bow of Burning Gold* (1929) betray, even in their titles, Root's mixture of influences. His verse, forthright and self-declared, sometimes suffers from its own downrightness, emerging from what is evidently a transitional period. But his protests are spontaneous, and from an avowedly romantic vision he reaches toward a poetry that has breadth. His descriptions are particularly rich; his poetry, writes Genevieve Taggard, "is often like the paintings of Rousseau—his animals rise up in the midst of thick blades of plants. He achieves what few moderns even try to achieve: the difficult welding of being and intellect."

SCRUB OAK

I am like a scrub oak tree:
Granite is good earth for me.
I am small—but very tough:
Rock, for me, is food enough.
Elms may lift their pebbled towers
Higher, and the October flowers
Of the maples flush and blaze
Brighter than my sober phase;
But I hold my steadfast bronze
Leaves when they are skeletons.

Also in the summer I,
All that earth can do, defy:

Barren ledge and burning earth
Are foundation of my mirth.
There my silver-shaggy boughs
Feed the wildwood deer, not cows;
And that pert and furry flame—
The red-squirrel—in mad game
Runs across my leafy hills
For his emerald domiciles.
Oven-bird and loud towhee
Have a strong green shield in me,
Bravely held against the sun.
Under my low bosses run
Fragrant gloss and dainty twine
Of wintergreen and partridge-vine.
And (while I turn the sun's shock)
Spring's lusty burnished partridge-cock
Beats his wings until they drum
Love's superb exordium.

Rock below and sun above—
Such is the harsh life I love;
Sun above and rock below—
Still I bud, and leaf, and grow:
Like little Jack in the old tale
I fight my giants—and prevail.

In serenity I fashion
With quiet power and quiet passion
Stalwart, loving-intricate
Cups to hold the glossy freight
Of the future's forests shut
In the brown joke of a nut.

Ice storms come, and ice storms go;
Fire's crimson rivers flow
Flooding with their tidal waves
My green homely architraves:
Quietly I rise again
Over violence or chicane—
Defying from the deeper granite
The skin-diseases of the planet.

Listen to a scrub oak tree
Speaking his philosophy:
"Rock and sun and sand are good
Always to a brave man's mood:
Build on waste and desolation
Your green towers of affirmation;
If no God or man be fed,
Offer deer their emerald bread;
Tho you shield no man or maid,
Give the little rabbits shade!"

PRETTY POLLY

An agile noisy jungle flower he flies
Where monkeys pelt fierce peccaries with nuts;
And alligators lurk for chance supplies
'Neath river villages of tree-top huts.

When the Brazilian sun—a red-hot drum—
Rises, he screams a challenge with gold beak
To tell the jungle that the day is come;
Then preens each crimson feather with a tweak.

Fed with Andean milk, the Amazon
Glitters between the forests where he dines;
He gathers golden fruit or lunches on
The lustrous berries of vanilla vines.

He shouts at pythons looped like harmless boughs,
Or the poor sleepy sloths that scarcely move;
He ruffles plumes and utters lyric vows
To tell some pretty parrot-flirt his love.

And he will guard, a brilliant sentinel,
The hollow nest where in a round warm egg
His son lies prisoner in a quiet cell,
Waiting his scarlet wing, his golden leg.

And when the sun, like some red armadillo,
Burrows into the West and birds must doze,
Cushioned all night upon an airy pillow
The parrot sleeps—except his gripping toes.

. . . . . .

But someday it may be a Caliban
Will capture him and sell him to a cage
In our gray North, and make brass bars the span
Of one who had a jungle heritage.

Bird of bronze lyrics once, who blazed and flew,
He will become a thing of solemn folly
To please old maids or yokels at a zoo:
He'll ask for crackers and say, "Pretty Polly!"

EDMUND WILSON

Edmund Wilson was born May 8, 1895, at Red Bank, New Jersey, which is still the home of his family. He graduated from Princeton University, went into service when America entered the War and remained in France until the end of it. He joined the staff of *Vanity Fair* where one of his colleagues was John Peale Bishop, with whose collaboration he prepared a volume of mordant humor, subacid thrusts and swift nonsense, *The Undertaker's Garland* (1922). After becoming managing editor of *Vanity Fair*, he left that fashionable periodical to join *The New Republic*. Some of his critical contributions to this weekly were collected in *Discordant Encounters* (1926), a volume which, possibly because of its lack of integration, has been insufficiently praised. His novel, *I Thought of Daisy* (1929), was published at almost the same time as his book of poems, *Poets, Farewell* (1929).

Poets, Farewell is, like *Discordant Encounters*, an alert but uncoördinated offering. Its indecisions make the reader conscious that Wilson stands at the cross-roads, half convinced that the practice of poetry is not for him and yet unwilling to relinquish it. The very contents disclose the quandary: the self-declared poet of "Copper and White," "Infection" and the title-poem is shouldered out by the prose-fancier of "Jersey Coast," and "Oneida County Fair" who, in turn, is interrupted by the ironic critic of "American Masterpieces." The author has not quite come to terms with himself. But the poet dictates the mood even though he cannot as yet dominate the medium.

POETS, FAREWELL

Poets, farewell!—farewell, gay pastorals!
 Clear amber cider-brandy; green-eyed cats;

Dim "blues"; blue willow-pattern dinner plates;
Waking to birds and light from four white walls;
Green deeps of ponds the sun-burned bather cleaves—
Dark waters, warm by gusts or loded cold;
Blue hills, green valleys like great maps unrolled;
Weeds in the garden; hornets in the eaves.

—We have rhymed under gray skies in the stubble grass—
Sped plunging motor-rides with drunken song—
Had Wyatt with breakfast, Yeats with the final glass.
—Poets, farewell!—O subtle and O strong!—
Voices, farewell!—the silver and the brass—
I leave that speech to you who have the tongue.

INFECTION

Five days in fever thus I lay—
With stinging eyes could only stare
Where naked branches cracked the gray
Or fog suffused the empty air.

Baked like a crock, without, within,
By night I came to understand,
With shifting limbs and shriveled skin,
Brunetto on the burning sand—

Yet him like some poor soldier gassed
Recalled—to shudder at the sign!—
Unslaked by poetry at last,
The pain, but not the poet's line.

I thought bad whiskey, manners, plays,
Bad talk abroad, bad work alone,
Bad damp apartments on bad days,
Have poisoned me from brain to bone—

Those streets where once my freedom found
Love, summer and the muse—I start
To gaze upon that happy ground
With hatred and a sickened heart—

Yet knew—and deep in fever sunk—
Not fogs had stretched me there to sprawl,
Not all seen, said, read, written, drunk,
But the bad heart that poisons all.

ROBERT HILLYER

Robert (Silliman) Hillyer was born in East Orange, New Jersey, June 3, 1895. He attended Kent School, and Harvard College. After graduating from the latter, he was an ambulance driver with the French army from 1917 to 1919, was at Copenhagen as Fellow of the American-Scandinavian foundation in 1921, and since that time has been Assistant Professor of English at Trinity College (from which he received the honorary degree of A.M.) and Assistant Professor of English at Harvard.

Hillyer's first book was as innocuous as its title, *Sonnets and Other Lyrics* (1917), following which came six volumes of varying merit. Hillyer's seventh, entitled with an appropriateness suspiciously like a pun *The Seventh Hill* (1928), is by all means his best. On the surface the verse seems to lack that sense of discovery which distinguishes poetry from versification. But this is only because Hillyer's technique and idiom are traditional. His experiences, if not unique, are significant and his utterance, though full of foreign and unmistakable accents, has unmistakable authority. Possibly because there is nothing local in his subject-matter or treatment, Hillyer's work found more favor in England than in America, *The Halt in the Garden* (1925) having a foreword by Arthur Machen and eliciting high praise from Middleton Murry.

Though the contours of this poetry are delicate to the point of elegance, the spirit upholding them has a sustaining strength. "Prothalamion," which is the peak of the volume, is typical. Upon a theme which has done duty since the beginning of art, in a form which is uncompromisingly classical, Hillyer has constructed twenty-six stanzas not one of which falls below a high seriousness.

"AS ONE WHO BEARS BENEATH HIS NEIGHBOR'S ROOF"

As one who bears beneath his neighbor's roof
Some thrust that staggers his unready wit
And brooding through the night on such reproof
Too late conceives the apt reply to it,

So all our life is but an afterthought,
A puzzle solved long past the time of need,
And tardy wisdom that one failure bought
Finds no occasion to be used in deed.

Fate harries us; we answer not a word,
Or answering too late, we waste our breath;
Not even a belated quip is heard
From those who bore the final taunt of death;
And thus the Jester parries all retort:
His jest eternal, and our lives so short.

PASTORAL

So soft in the hemlock wood
The phoenix sang his lullaby,
Shepherds drowsed where they stood,
Slumber felled each passerby,
And lovers at their first caress
Slept in virgin loneliness.

Not for mortal eye to see
Naked life arise from embers;
Only the dark hemlock tree
Evergreen itself, remembers
How the Word came into being,
No man hearing, no man seeing.

From the taut bow of sleep
Shoots the phoenix toward the day,
Shepherds wake and call their sheep,
Wanderers go on their way.
Unaware how death went by,
Lovers under the hemlocks lie.

PROTHALAMION

(*Second Section*)

The hills turn hugely in their sleep
With sound of grinding rock and soil
While down their granite shoulders leap
The waterbrooks in white turmoil.

The vigil of Good Friday done,
Our second spring ascends the height;
The earth turns southward toward the sun,
And trees which guard the pascal door,
In leaf once more,
Once more are murmurous with strange delight.

For now is the world's Eastertide,
And born that they may die again
Arise from death the gods who died.
Osiris, slender as young grain,
Comes back to Isis; the shy lad
Adonis wakens by the stream;
And Jesus, innocently clad
In samite, walks beneath the trees,
Half ill-at-ease
That Judas and the Cross were but a dream.

And thou art she whom I have seen
Always, but never understood,
In broken shrines festooned with green,
In twilight chapels of the wood;
Or on the hills a shepherdess
Walked with the sun full on her face,
And though her body and her dress
Appareled her in meek disguise,
I dropped my eyes,
For still I knew the goddess by her pace.

I know thee now in morning light
Though thou art wrought of flesh and blood,
And though the mother of the night
Resumes at dawn her maidenhood;
And though love severed with his knife
The girdle of the million years
And yielded to importunate life
The toll she asks of those who still
Would journey, till
They pass her known and visible frontiers.

The children from beyond the sun
Come bounding down the hillside grass,
And in the joyous rout is one
Who smiles and will not let us pass.
He stands, the fairest of them all,
And in his loveliness I trace
Thy loveliness. His light footfall
Bends not the grass he treads upon;
But he is gone
Before my eyes have feasted on his face.

Let him go back beyond the air;
This spring is ours, it is not his;
Those eager lips would take their share
Of love's yet undiminished kiss.
Fairer than he, as young, as gay,
As much a child, forget all things,
All but this transitory day
Of love, all things but love, and give
Thy fugitive
Delights to me who fly but with thy wings.

In undulant desire we merge,
On tides of light we sport and rest;
We swerve up from the deeper surge
To hover on the trembling crest
Of joy, and when the wave has passed,
Then smooth is the swing to the abyss
Of quietness, where with a last
Eye-darkening smile, we say farewell
Until the spell
Shall be renewed. Forget all things but this.

No grass-blade bends, no shadow stirs;
Love mounted high, slumber is deep;
Deep is the spring beneath the firs,
A sweet and lonely place for sleep.
And waking, we shall cool our flesh
In depths so clear they seem as air;
Twofold in beauty, thou refresh
Thy body in that water, bright

With muted light,
And brighter still for thy reflection there.

While I along the bank shall find
The flowers that opened with the day
Still dew-drenched, and with these entwined
New fronds of fern or darker bay.
Or pausing in a shaft of sun
That strikes across the mottled glade
Watch thee too long, beloved one,
Watch thee with eyes grown big with tears
Because the years
Suddenly spoke and made my heart afraid.

Giver of immortality—
That was thy name within the shrine—
The Mighty Mother, Star of the Sea,
All syllables of love were thine
To wear as lesser women wear
The garlands of their fragile spring;
Why then within my heart this fear
Of time? why then amid the shout
Of life, this doubt
That clouds the new sun like an outspread wing?

We must not to a foe like time
Yield up our present. Take my hand
And up the morning we shall climb
Until the wooded valley land
Lies all beneath us in the drowse
If love's meridial aftermath;
The trellis of entwining boughs
Trembles in the great joy of green,
But does not screen
The comfortable glimpse of homeward path.

We will not to our ancient foe
Yield all this happiness; it lies
Shielded from sickle and from snow
And all the menace of the skies.

At night I shall watch over thee,
The future safe beneath thy breast,
And after autumn there shall be
Dayspring, when for each other's sake
We shall awake
And follow Love beyond the unknown west.

LOUIS GINSBERG

Louis Ginsberg was born at Newark, New Jersey, October 1, 1896. He was educated at Rutgers College and received his M.A. at Columbia University, 1924. Since 1918 he has been teaching in the high schools of New Jersey and was, for a while, editor of a book page on the *Newark Ledger.*

His volume, *The Attic of the Past* (1920), is frankly immature. But, half-buried beneath juvenile echoes, there are several lyrics of smooth promise. Ginsberg's recent work begins to fulfill the expectation. Obviously influenced by the brightly colored simplicities of Lizette Woodworth Reese, Ginsberg has the gift of song. And if the music is not entirely his own, at least he knows how it should be sung.

A QUIET STREET AFTER RAIN

Glittering keen, all things appear
Clairvoyant, carved, and crystal-clear.
Happy to watch the raindrops cease,
Houses are honeycombed with peace;
And dazzling with a blazing show,
Windows are pelting suns below.
Colors are ambushing the sense
With silent, flaming eloquence,
While every front-yard lawn is seen
Twinkling a myriad tongues of green.
Marvelous, too, it is to see
A rose-bud dipped in deity!
Nearby a spider has begun
Upon a fence to thread the sun.
The street is hushed, though far off steals
The powdery, crumbling sound of wheels . . .
Till Time, who loiters by to scrawl
A warning on a garden wall,

Lingers to watch in strange amaze
How quiet loveliness can blaze—
How immortality can be
Familiar as a fence or tree!

HOWARD McKINLEY CORNING

Howard McKinley Corning was born October 23, 1896, on a farm a few miles west of Lincoln, Nebraska. He spent the years of his youth in Ohio, but his schooling there was limited on account of ill-health. In 1919 his family journeyed to "the epic greenland of Oregon," where he took up his residence on Mount Tabor on the edge of Portland. It was here that he became a florist by vocation, raised prize poultry and composed most of his verse.

His first volume, *These People* (1926), placed Corning as the leader of the group of young Oregon poets, a group which expressed itself through the work of H. L. Davis (whose "Primapara" received one of the prizes awarded by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*), Borghild Lee, Charles Oluf Olsen, Ethel Romig Fuller. Corning's equipment was greater than those of his fellows. Strangely enough, though *These People* was strongly local and Western in character, it was not without its foreign—and New England—influences. The inflection of E. A. Robinson directs though it does not dominate Corning's periods; in the subsequent poems the bantering metaphysics of Robert Frost are apparent. These lift Corning's preoccupations above a too rigid reporting and save him from a tendency to fall into monotonous reflections of monotony.

In an era of accomplished versifiers. Corning reaches an accomplishment past method. His faults are accentual rather than integral. The substance of his work is solid; his competence is obvious; and his spirit convinces with an assured sincerity.

PRUNING VINES

In February, when the sap's below
The inattentive earth, I take my shears
And prune away the too-audacious years.
It's grapes I want, and not mere leafy show.
I trim the trailing year's growth to a span,
With only laterals intact for crop;
A snip or two and I know where to stop
To bring a harvest where my hooks began.

It takes some fortitude to cut a vine
Half into dead ends for the cloying mold,
Where growth takes profit as the shears take hold,
Cutting the heart a little . . . as I cut mine.
But since it's grapes I want, I understand
How to rebuke the heart to fill the hand.

AUTUMN BIRD

In autumn pastures where a bird had flown
I sought behind the curtains of the wind.
It wasn't any bird that I had known.
I followed it to leave my heart alone.

What bird it was it swiftly interlined
The meadow fence, and lo,
It left me thinking that my eyes were blind
Losing a bird so quickly, undefined.

It may have been that autumn's waning glow
Had seared my sight. It may have been that kind
Of bird that is less bird than hint of snow.
Perhaps it was the autumn I saw go.

E. E. CUMMINGS

E. E. (Edward Estlin) Cummings, born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1896, first attracted considerable attention by his curiously punctuated and even more strangely spaced poems in *The Dial.* What was most pronounced in his experiments was an eccentricity of pattern intended to accentuate a startling idiom. Because of these superficial oddities, Cummings was soon attacked by the orthodox as a literary nihilist and hailed by his misled admirers as a new leader of "the left wing." Cummings received, in fact, almost every sort of criticism except a detached one.

An unpartisan appraisal reveals several facts. First, Cummings is no more radical than any poetic experimenter who, attempting certain verbal effects, commits errors in emphasis and proportion. His preoccupation with typographical design has often tricked him; much of his work suffers because of his distortions, and that part of it which succeeds is successful in spite of, and not because of, its form. Second, he seems utterly incapable of self-criticism;

his work, whether in an eruptive or quiet vein, has both the verve and the brashness of adolescence. It is evident that Cummings is extremely productive fecund, and so it is not strange that his first book, *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), is a jumble of imaginative exuberance, cool precision and archaic affectations. His is a mind which is, in quick succession, lyrical, fantastic, grotesque, pathetic, savage. His distorted punctuation is significant of esthetic immaturity. This breaking up of words which have an integrity only as long as they are joined, and denoting the first person singular with a small i, fail to achieve either emphasis or modesty. In destroying what are usually essentially simple patterns, Cummings is likely to provoke the reader to nothing more than irritation. As has been implied, beneath his surface eccentricities which are responsible for his notoriety, Cummings' emotions are not at all bizarre; often they are actually banal. Unstrangled by the malformed calligrams adapted from Apollinaire, one detects a clean and distinct voice. Cummings is, after all, not so far from orthodoxy; his couplets remain couplets, even though he wedges white paper between them, and his appealingly youthful catalog of his lady's charms loses nothing by appearing in a form as regular as Villon's.

Above all, this poet exhibits a genuine gift of fresh imagination. His is undoubtedly a rhetorical language, but the rhetoric of Cummings has as fine a swing as any since Swinburne. It would be a pity if the annoyance caused by Cummings' visual disorganizations were to render the reader deaf to phrases as persuasive as, "Thy fingers make early flowers of all things," "The bulge and nuzzle of the sea," "Thy mouth is a chord of crimson music," "Thy forehead is a flight of flowers," "In the street of the sky, night walks, scattering poems," "Thoughts more white than wool," "Spring comes—the lean and definite houses are troubled," "The sea through her blind miles of crumbling silence."

The Enormous Room (1922), which preceded the others, is a novel, a brilliantly realized study of character against an intensified background of the War. Except for a few passages, it is orthodox in form.

Cummings' first volume of poetry was succeeded by *XLI Poems* (1925), the privately printed *&* (1925)—the sections of which were properly divided into A, N, and D—and *is 5* (1926), evidently so-called since this is volume five of Cummings' works. These, and his phantasmagoric play *him*, may, as Laura Riding and Robert Graves declare in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, "be considered conveniently to illustrate the divorce of advanced contemporary poetry from the common-sense standards of ordinary intelligence" and that "his only fault is that he has tried to do two things at once: to remain loyal to the requirements of the poetic mind for clearness, and to get the ordinary reading public to call the result 'poetry.' " It is to be suspected, however, that Cummings is little concerned with "the ordinary reading public" and cares more for his own pleasure in the mixing of grave and piquant. This mixture is the principal component of all his writing. Whatever the surface differences, whether the piece is a brusque satire or an involved drama, there is the same serious intent disguised by jig-saw typography, the same school-boy nose-thumbing interrupting a romantic and unashamed tenderness. Here, essentially, is a genuine and frequently sentimental lyricist, even though he tries to hide the fact by uttering his songs in a syncopated staccato, splitting syllables with the punctuation of a cracked tambourine.

"WHEN GOD LETS MY BODY BE"

when god lets my body be

From each brave eye shall sprout a tree
fruit that dangles therefrom

the purpled world will dance upon
Between my lips which did sing

a rose shall beget the spring
that maidens whom passion wastes

will lay between their little breasts
My strong fingers beneath the snow

into strenuous birds shall go
my love walking in the grass

their wings will touch with her face
and all the while shall my heart be

With the bulge and nuzzle of the sea

SUNSET

stinging
gold swarms
upon the spires
silver

chants the litanies the
great bells are ringing with rose
the lewd fat bells
and a tall

wind
is dragging
the
sea

with

dream

-S

IMPRESSION—IV

the hours rise up putting off stars and it is
dawn
into the street of the sky light walks scattering poems

on earth a candle is
extinguished the city
wakes
with a song upon her
mouth having death in her eyes

and it is dawn
the world
goes forth to murder dreams. . . .

i see in the street where strong
men are digging bread
and i see the brutal faces of
people contented hideous hopeless cruel happy

and it is day,

in the mirror
i see a frail
man
dreaming
dreams
dreams in the mirror

and it
is dusk   on earth

a candle is lighted
and it is dark.
the people are in their houses
the frail man is in his bed
the city

sleeps with death upon her mouth having a song in her eyes
the hours descend,
putting on stars. . . .

in the street of the sky night walks scattering poems

LA GUERRE

I

the bigness of cannon
is skillful,

but i have seen
death's clever enormous voice
which hides in a fragility
of poppies. . . .

i say that sometimes
on these long talkative animals
are laid fists of huger silence

I have seen all the silence
filled with vivid noiseless boys

at Roupy
i have seen
between barrages,

the night utter ripe unspeaking girls.

II

O sweet spontaneous
earth how often have
the
doting
fingers of
prurient philosophers pinched
and
poked
thee
, has the naughty thumb
of science prodded
thy
beauty , how
often have the religions taken
thee upon their scraggy knees
squeezing and

buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive
gods
(but
true
to the incomparable
couch of death thy
rhythmic
lover

thou answerest

them only with
spring)

CHANSON INNOCENT

I

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame baloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's
spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer
old baloonman whistles
far   and   wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing
from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's
spring
and
    the
        goat-footed

baloonman   whistles
far
and
wee

ALWAYS BEFORE YOUR VOICE

Always before your voice my soul
half-beautiful and wholly droll
is as some smooth and awkward foal,
whereof young moons begin
the newness of his skin,

so of my stupid sincere youth
the exquisite failure uncouth
discovers a trembling and smooth
Unstrength, against the strong
silences of your song;

or as a single lamb whose sheen
of full unsheared fleece is mean
beside its lovelier friends, between
your thoughts more white than wool
My thought is sorrowful;

but my heart smote in trembling thirds
of anguish quivers to your words,
As to a flight of thirty birds
shakes with a thickening fright
the sudden fooled light.

it is the autumn of a year:
When the thin air is stooped with fear,
across the harvest whitely peer
empty of surprise
death's faultless eyes

(whose hand my folded soul shall know
while on faint hills do frailly go
The peaceful terrors of the snow,
and before your dead face
which sleeps, a dream shall pass)

and these my days their sounds and flowers
Fall in a pride of petaled hours,
like flowers at the feet of mowers
whose bodies strong with love
through meadows hugely move.

yet what am i that such and such
mysteries very simply touch
me, whose heart-wholeness overmuch
Expects of your hair pale,
a terror musical?

while in an earthless hour my fond
soul seriously yearns beyond
this fern of sunset frond on frond
opening in a rare
Slowness of gloried air. . . .

The flute of morning stilled in noon—
noon the implacable bassoon—
now Twilight seeks the thrill of moon,
washed with a wild and thin
despair of violin.

SONG

Thy fingers make early flowers of
all things.
thy hair mostly the hours love:
a smoothness which
sings, saying
(though love be a day)
do not fear, we will go amaying.

thy whitest feet crisply are straying.
Always
thy moist eyes are at kisses playing,
whose strangeness much
says; singing
(though love be a day)
for which girl art thou flowers bringing?

To be thy lips is a sweet thing
and small.
Death, thee i call rich beyond wishing
if this thou catch,
else missing.
(though love be a day
and life be nothing, it shall not stop kissing).

LOUISE BOGAN

Louise Bogan was born in Livermore Falls, Maine, August 11, 1897, and was educated in country schools through New England and at the Girls' Latin School in Boston. Except for a year in Vienna and another in Santa Fé, she has lived in New York State since 1919.

Body of This Death (1923) is one of the most brilliant first books of the period. The accent is not new; we have already heard it more crisply in Elinor Wylie's precise syllables. But if Miss Bogan lacks her forerunner's dazzling craftsmanship, she achieves effects not unworthy of her subtlety. There are less than thirty poems in her volume and only two of them cover more than a page. Yet every stanza gives evidence of a mind which is as sensitized as the eye is sharp, an intellect which, for all its burden of thought, expresses itself best in the lyric. The longer blank verse is only moderately interesting compared with such a vivid screen as "Decoration" or so cool and chiseled a piece as "Statue and Birds." Few of her contemporaries have surpassed the finesse of these—few indeed have equaled it—while the bright contempt of "Women" and the frozen imagery in "Medusa" seem destined for more than contemporary applause.

Dark Summer (1929) emphasizes the impression made by her first volume. The technique, no longer so scintillating, is simpler; the accents, deep, bell-like, vesperal, are more her own. The metaphysical note has strengthened, the beat of measured blood has become more pronounced. "Simple Autumnal" and "Come, Break with Time—" suggest Léonie Adams without implying indebtedness. Miss Bogan's poems, rooted in observation, rich in implication, are swiftly intuitive and her spirit has confirmed her intuitions.

Sometimes her spare definiteness reminds one of the later Yeats, sometimes the slow pace of her measures is too consciously thickened. But, mostly, mood and measure join to preserve her accurate quality.

MEDUSA

I had come to the house, in a cave of trees,
Facing a sheer sky.
Everything moved,—a bell hung ready to strike,
Sun and reflection wheeled by.

When the bare eyes were before me
And the hissing hair,
Held up at a window, seen through a door.
The stiff bald eyes, the serpents on the forehead
Formed in the air.

This is a dead scene forever now.
Nothing will ever stir.
The end will never brighten it more than this,
Nor the rain blur.

The water will always fall, and will not fall,
And the tipped bell make no sound.
The grass will always be growing for hay
Deep on the ground.

And I shall stand here like a shadow
Under the great balanced day,
My eyes on the yellow dust that was lifting in the wind,
And does not drift away.

WOMEN

Women have no wilderness in them,
They are provident instead,
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts
To eat dusty bread.

They do not see cattle cropping red winter grass,
They do not hear
Snow water going down under culverts
Shallow and clear.

They wait, when they should turn to journeys,
They stiffen, when they should bend.
They use against themselves that benevolence
To which no man is friend.

They cannot think of so many crops to a field
Or of clean wood cleft by an ax.
Their love is an eager meaninglessness
Too tense, or too lax.

They hear in every whisper that speaks to them
A shout and a cry.
As like as not, when they take life over their door-sills
They should let it go by.

DECORATION

A macaw preens upon a branch outspread
With jewelry of seed. He's deaf and mute.
The sky behind him splits like gorgeous fruit
And claw-like leaves clutch light till it has bled.
The raw diagonal bounty of his wings
Scrapes on the eye color too chafed. He beats
A flattered tail out against gauzy heats;
He has the frustrate look of cheated kings.
And all the simple evening passes by:
A gillyflower spans its little height
And lovers with their mouths press out their grief.
The bird fans wide his striped regality
Prismatic, while against a sky breath-white
A crystal tree lets fall a crystal leaf.

STATUE AND BIRDS

Here, in the withered arbor, like the arrested wind,
Straight sides, carven knees,
Stands the statue, with hands flung out in alarm
Or remonstrances.

Over the lintel sway the woven bracts of the vine
In a pattern of angles.
The quill of the fountain falters, woods rake on the sky
Their brusque tangles.

The birds walk by slowly, circling the marble girl,
The golden quails,
The pheasants closed up in their arrowy wings,
Dragging their sharp tails.

The inquietudes of the sap and of the blood are spent.
What is forsaken will rest.
But her heel is lifted,—she would flee,—the whistle of the birds
Fails on her breast.

THE ALCHEMIST

I burned my life that I might find
A passion wholly of the mind,
Thought divorced from eye and bone,
Ecstasy come to breath alone.
I broke my life to seek relief
From the flawed light of love and grief.

With mounting beat the utter fire
Charred existence and desire.
It died low, ceased its sudden thresh.
I had found unmysterious flesh—
Not the mind's avid substance—still
Passionate beyond the will.

SIMPLE AUTUMNAL

The measured blood beats out the year's delay.
The tearless eyes and heart forbidden grief,
Watch the burned, restless, but abiding leaf,
The brighter branches arming the bright day.

The cone, the curving fruit should fall away,
The vine-stem crumble, ripe grain know its sheaf.
Bonded to time, fires should have done, be brief,
But, serfs to sleep, they glitter and they stay.

Because not last nor first, grief in its prime
Wakes in the day, and knows of life's intent.
Anguish would break the seal set over time
And bring the baskets where the bough is bent.

Full seasons come, yet filled trees keep the sky,
And never scent the ground where they will lie.

CASSANDRA

To me, one silly task is like another.
I bare the shambling tricks of lust and pride.
This flesh will never give a child its mother,—
Song, like a wing, tears through my breast, my side,
And madness chooses out my voice again,
Again. I am the chosen no hand saves:
The shrieking heaven lifted over men,
Not the dumb earth, wherein they set their graves.

"COME, BREAK WITH TIME—"

Come, break with time,
You who were lorded
By a clock's chime
So ill afforded.
If time is allayed
Be not afraid.

I shall break, if I will.
Break, since you must.
Time has its fill,
Sated with dust.
Long the clock's hand
Burned like a brand.

Take the rocks' speed
And earth's heavy measure.
Let buried seed
Drain out time's pleasure,
Take time's decrees.
Come, cruel ease.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER

Joseph Auslander was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 19, 1897. He attended St. Catherine's School in Philadelphia, the Eastern District High School in Brooklyn, Harvard University and The Sorbonne. In 1922 he became a teacher at Harvard and in 1924 his first volume, *Sunrise Trumpets,* appeared with a foreword by Padraic Colum.

The outstanding feature of *Sunrise Trumpets* is its technique. Auslander is an adroit fashioner of polished phrases, of smoothly slipping terms of speech. The music which he employs is wholly traditional; he disdains none of the older properties no matter how often they have been repeated. His book is so full of wings, water and birdsong that the general effect is nervous; it is, for the greater part, an actively exaggerated rhetoric on which he relies. But, if Auslander is a promiscuous lover rather than a critical connoisseur of words, his romantic and, it may be suspected, rather conscious intoxication scatters a profusion of arresting epithets and images. He hears a cricket "stitching the dark edge of dawn," a cock "rapping in four rickety words his challenge to the sluggard," a bell which "jargons like water dropping in a well." If his verse seems to force the emotion rather than to allow the emotion to direct it, one remembers poems like "Interval," "Dawn at the Rain's Edge," and bits of illumination like "the hawk-dark trees," "water torturing through frozen snow," "the sulky gradual querulous content of chickens puffed and blinky in the sun," "lone gulls blown about the sky," "the bronze rumor of bees," and

> Things too small for a name
> Moving through private tunnels down to their instant of flame.

As has been stated, much of this volume is rhetorical and even bombastic; verbal felicity too often becomes coddled facility.

Cyclop's Eye (1926) has sharper edges. The poet, though still inclined to overdecorate, is less determined to make his strings quiver with a continual *vibrato*. He seeks for toughness and sometimes, as in "Knockout" and "Steel," attains it. *Letters to Women* (1929) is not so fortunate. Although some of the stanzas are shrewd, the book errs on the side of adulation and affectation. The author of these missives seems to have been so overcome by his subjects that he degenerates into the confused softness from which he had almost shaken himself free. He indulges in orgies of words—of words about words—and (in the "Letter to Elinor Wylie" for example) ties himself up in phrases and metaphors as hopelessly mixed as:

> O restless heart! O deft and ravenous brain
> Whose diamond arithmetic devoured
> Confusion—only to be lost again
> After the stringent epithet had flowered!

When Auslander is not so preoccupied with overloading the lush or "stringent" epithet his verse has more quality. *Hell in Harness* (1929) is an unsuccessful overcompensation. Attempting the brusque savagery of Joseph Moncure March's *The Set-Up* and *The Wild Party*, Auslander's exaggerations are as glaring in his strained patois as in his abuse of precious words. His taste, essentially sound when considering the poetry of the past and unconcerned with himself, is proved by *The Wingèd Horse* (1927) and *The Wingèd Horse Anthology* (1929), both of which were compiled in collaboration with Frank Ernest Hill.

INTERVAL

Water pulls nervously whispering satin across cool roots, cold stones;
And a bird balances his soul on a song flash, a desperate outcry:
These are the minor chords, the monotones;
This the undefeated gesture against an armored sky.

The moment is metal; the sun crawling over it is a fly
Head down on a bronze ceiling; the hot stillness drones:
And you go sliding through green sea shafts and I
Am an old mountain warming his tired bones.

ULYSSES IN AUTUMN

I, who knew Circe, have come back
To sink a furrow in the loam;
Left twilights bellowing and black
For the soft glow of home:
To hear instead of a guttural sea
The needles of Penelope.

Still in my heart the Trojan sack
Hisses; and Helen's beauty goes
Glimmering. . . . And I have come back
To drink the stale cup of repose—
I, who knew Circe, and the wine
That turns men grunting into swine.

Can I forget Achilles? Fly
For ever from Calypso's guile?
The roaring red pit of that Eye
Drown in some domestic smile?
Cluck at a sweaty plow, who led
The white-flanked stallions of Diomed?

No, for these nerves are iron yet,
And in these veins, this caverned breast,
Echoes the howling parapet;
The trumpets will not let me rest. . . .
Think you Odysseus drowses so
Who still can bend the terrible bow.

The lotus voices call my blood
Implacable and rumorous:
All night there drums a ghostly thud
Of feet. . . . O young Telemachus,
Plead with your mother to release
My spirit fevered for the Fleece!

The trees are straining in the storm,
Spattering gold; and from the sea
The old tang creeps between the warm
Breath of her lovely flesh and me:
Each dank leaf dripping down in fire
Fuels the dream of Troy and Tyre.

I know it will be some little thing
Like wild geese in a streaming wedge
Severely beautiful; a string
Of bird-prints on the water's edge
That suddenly shall crack galley whips
And hurl me headlong to the ships!

DAWN AT THE RAIN'S EDGE

The drowsy, friendly, comfortable creak
Of axles arguing and wet spokes gleaming,
When old empty tumbrels blunder dreaming, too sleepy to speak,
Blunder down the road in the rain dreaming.

And the house-lights rub at the shining dripping shadows
Over the windows; through the drenched silver willows; everywhere:
In the sulphurous fluctuant marsh this side the steaming meadows
Where black weeds trouble the moon's drowned hair.

There is a sudden fuss of draggled feathers and the swing
Of winds in a hissing burst of raindrops; then a cry
Of color at the hill's rim; a strange bright glimmering;
And a lark talking madness in some corner of the sky.

TOUCH

I hear a cricket at my window sill
Stitching the dark edge of the dawn; and now
The climbing siren of a distant cow
Rouses the sun over the eastern hill.

A cock is rapping in four rickety words
His challenge to the sluggard; and a bell
Jargons like water dripping in a well;
And dew is in the throats of all the birds.

I need but outstretched hands and I embrace
The luxury of leaves: yet, while I lean
On their long coolness, I can feel the keen
Light of your fingers drift across my face!

ELEGY

Fled is the swiftness of all the white-footed ones
Who had a great cry in them and the wrath of speed:
They are no more among us; they and their sons
Are dead indeed.

So the river mews twist in long loops over the river,
Wheeling and shifting with the wind's and the tide's shift,
And pass in a black night—and nothing is left but a shiver
To show they were swift.

Whenever I hear a gull's throat throb in a fog,
Watch the owl's velvet swoop, the high hawk's lonely paces,
I think of the heels of him who lies like a log
And his friends under turf and the rain creeping down on their faces

And my heart goes sick and the hell in my heart could break
To the edge of my eyes for the mates I shall not be knowing
Anywhere now though the ice booms loud in the lake
And the geese honk north again and the heron's going.

DAVID McCORD

David (Thompson Watson) McCord was born in New York City, November 15, 1897, attended public and private schools, Princeton, New Jersey, and Portland, Oregon. He graduated from Plattsburg, as Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery in 1918, and from Harvard in 1921. He has done editorial work in Cambridge and Boston since 1923.

Oddly Enough (1926) was a volume of essays succeeded by *Floodgate* (1927). The latter volume, containing McCord's verse since 1922, is unpretentious but precise. "The Spider" illustrates McCord's gift of depicting fragmentary moments with cool nicety.

THE SPIDER

Now with a clean thread
Of a single span,
Softly he has spread
His silken fan

That shrub and thorn enclose
By the dead well,
Sweet where the sunning rose
Binds in a spell

The bee, the butterfly,
All foolish wings
That open at the sigh
Of lineal springs.

And there, against the day's
Delicious draft,
He carries in old ways
His cunning craft:

Dropping along the cool
Invisible track,
A spider with a spool
Upon his back.

A lord within the cone
Of his domain,
He reckons from his throne
The shriveled slain:

A bottle fly, the moth
Who tried to pass
The filter of his cloth
And found it glass.

CLINCH CALKINS

(Marion) Clinch Calkins was born in Evansville, Wisconsin, and, except for occasional residences in New York and abroad, lived in her own state until her marriage. Prior to that, she was engaged in many works in many places: cost-of-living survey for the U. S. Government, child-labor department of an Industrial Commission in Milwaukee, advertising in New York, art-librarian in Florence. She taught at the University of Wisconsin for four years (two in the History of Art, two in English) and, after marrying Charles Marquis Merrell, removed to Philadelphia.

Poems (1928) discloses an author who has angularity but a not too pointed incisiveness. Much of Miss Calkins' volume is in the usual key; "I Was a Maiden" and "Tribute" are traditional in mood and modulation. But the more important verses proceed from a clash of extremes; classic order and chaotic unrestraint are intensified by juxtaposition. Miss Calkins is at ease in such disrupted contrasts of the significant and the glib, and of these "Tu Ne Quaesieris" is typical.

TU NE QUAESIERIS

(*Horace I—II*)

The night rolled out like velvet
And we drove from inn to inn.
And we drank a little purple wine,
We drank a little gin,
And I leaned my sight against your eyes
And saw what lay within.

Tu ne quaesieris (*scire nefas*)

We sat at ivory tables
And we played with amber ale.
The air grew warm and heavy,
The cigarettes burned stale.
The saxophone drew through the night
A deep barbaric trail.

—quem mihi quem tibi
Finem di dederint, Leuconoe,

Then moaned the saxophone, then crooned the coon,
Why don't you try these swoonin' blues,
Take a chance
On a trance?
Your girl's a dancing fool.

nec Babylonios
Temptaris numeros.

We crossed the long veranda
And found the swaying door.
The peril streamed through us like flags.
We waved across the floor.
Although we both were silent,
We heard a steady roar.

Swoon as the coon advises,
Lean as he tantalizes,
Swing with the singing violin,
Faint with the wine and gin
Against me. Lay your ear
Upon me. Hear the roar and din.

Ut melius quidquid erit pati!
Seu plures hiemes seu tribuit Jupiter ultinam,

If day should end at evening, and night be spent alone—
But listen to the colored man moan and groan.
But listen to the banjo and the saxophone.
Night was made to keep the flesh
From thinking of the bone.
Night was never made for those
Who have to lie alone.
Rock and sway
Take a chance on a trance,
This girl's a dancing fool.

Close your ear to the shoring surge that tides upon the heart;
It ebbed and flowed before you came, it will roar when you depart.
It's naught to do with love or gin, and naught with nigger's groan.
It is the flesh remembering it's briefer than the bone.

Quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare
Tyrrhenum.

Tomorrow all will clear away before a clear cold light,
If this girl is any lady she will quite forget tonight.

sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi
Spem longam reseces!

The night rolls out like velvet,
Yet here we sit and wait.
It's all been said a thousand years
About the ways of fate.
The night rolls out like velvet
And it's growing very late.

Dum loquimur, fugerit invida
Aetas; carpe diem,

Listen to the banjo and the saxophone.
Listen to the colored man moan and groan:
Night was never made for those
Who have to lie alone.
Night was made to keep the flesh
From remembering the bone.

quam minimum credula postero.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

Stephen Vincent Benét, the younger brother of William Rose Benét, was born at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in July, 1898. He was educated in various parts of the country, graduating from Yale in 1919.

At seventeen he published a small book containing six dramatic portraits, *Five Men and Pompey* (1915), a remarkable set of monologues which, in spite of distinct traces of Browning and Kipling, was little short of astounding, coming from a schoolboy. In Benét's next volume, *Young Adventure* (1918), one hears something more than the speech of an infant prodigy; the precocious facility has developed into a keen and individual vigor.

Heavens and Earth (1920), Benét's first representative collection, charts a greater imaginative sweep. Like his brother, the younger Benét is at his best in the decoratively grotesque; his fancy exults in running the scales between the whimsically bizarre and the lightly diabolic.

For a while Stephen Benét was too prolific to be self-critical. He published several novels (the best of which are *Jean Huguenot* and *Spanish Bayonet*), collaborated on two plays which flickered a few nights in New York, and, unconsciously perhaps, began imitating his contemporaries. *King David*, published in book form a few months after it won *The Nation's* poetry prize for 1923, is less Benét than usual; it seems unjust that at least half the prize for this poem was not awarded to Vachel Lindsay. *Tiger Joy* (1925) betrays haste; the poet allows his rhymes to dictate and often to blur the course of his imagery. But though *Tiger Joy* is padded out with negligible verse, it contains "The Golden Corpse," a splendid octave of sonnets, "The Mountain Whippoorwill" and "The Ballad of William Sycamore," two vigorous and thoroughly American ballads.

Stephen Benét's faculty for ballad-making stood him in good stead when he came to reconstruct the Civil War period in *John Brown's Body* (1928). With this work, the author, hitherto known only to a small circle, jumped into instant popularity. Within a few months, the book had reached more than one hundred thousand people, and Benét had proved that a long narrative poem if skillfully blended could hold attention as easily as a novel. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize the year following its publication.

The weakness of *John Brown's Body* is in the treatment. Although his canvas is epical, the author sacrifices the unity of the epic by abruptly changing meters, by a cinematographic switching from one character to another, by interluding his narrative with lyrics, ballads, elegies and even prose. Nor, in this intermingling, has he perfected a style of his own; the long cadences of Sandburg and the jingling beat of Lindsay occur throughout. It is, frankly, a work of assimilation rather than creation. And yet its virtues compensate for its defects. The historical events have been more powerfully projected by others, the battle-pictures are inferior to the fictional episodes—the forgotten George Parsons Lathrop has done better in "Keenan's Charge"—but the composite is so new, the issues so impartially treated that the struggle takes on a vitality barely suggested by orthodox histories. Benét's achievement of showing the war through its impact on a large number of dramatic personae—of Jake Diefer, who sees the war in terms of his Pennsylvania farmland, of Spade, the runaway slave, of Breckenridge, the Tennessee mountaineer, of Connecticut-born Jack Ellyat—is no small triumph. If Benét sacrifices unity, he gains speed, sudden interest and the nervous contrasts which are continually stimulating. If no single passage contains that unanalyzable but unmistakable quality which permeates great poetry, the originality of the work, the vigor of its portraits, the interpolated lyrics, and the unflagging pace reveal an unusually rich talent. Whatever its flaws, *John Brown's Body* is exciting virtuosity of a high order.

RAIN AFTER A VAUDEVILLE SHOW

The last pose flickered, failed. The screen's dead white
Glared in a sudden flooding of harsh light
Stabbing the eyes; and as I stumbled out
The curtains rose. A fat girl with a pout
And legs like hams, began to sing "His Mother."
Gusts of bad air rose in a choking smother;
Smoke, the wet steam of clothes, the stench of plush,
Powder, cheap perfume, mingled in a rush.
I stepped into the lobby—and stood still,
Struck dumb by sudden beauty, body and will.
Cleanness and rapture—excellence made plain—
The storming, thrashing arrows of the rain!
Pouring and dripping on the roofs and rods,
Smelling of woods and hills and fresh-turned sods,
Black on the sidewalks, gray in the far sky,
Crashing on thirsty panes, on gutters dry,
Hurrying the crowd to shelter, making fair
The streets, the houses, and the heat-soaked air,—
Merciful, holy, charging, sweeping, flashing,
It smote the soul with a most iron clashing!
Like dragons' eyes the street-lamps suddenly gleamed,
Yellow and round and dim-low globes of flame.
And, scarce-perceived, the clouds' tall banners streamed.
Out of the petty wars, the daily shame,
Beauty strove suddenly, and rose, and flowered. . . .
I gripped my coat and plunged where awnings lowered.
Made one with hissing blackness, caught, embraced,
By splendor and by striving and swift haste—
Spring coming in with thunderings and strife—
I stamped the ground in the strong joy of life!

WINGED MAN

The moon, a sweeping scimitar, dipped in the stormy straits,
The dawn, a crimson cataract, burst through the eastern gates,
The cliffs were robed in scarlet, the sands were cinnabar,
Where first two men spread wings for flight and dared the
hawk afar.

There stands the cunning workman, the crafty, past all praise,
The man who chained the Minotaur, the man who built the
Maze.
His young son is beside him and the boy's face is a light,
A light of dawn and wonder and of valor infinite.

Their great vans beat the cloven air, like eagles they mount
up,
Motes in the wine of morning, specks in a crystal cup,
And lest his wings should melt apace old Daedalus flies low,
But Icarus beats up, beats up, he goes where lightnings go.

He cares no more for warnings, he rushes through the sky,
Braving the crags of ether, daring the gods on high,
Black 'gainst the crimson sunset, gold over cloudy snows,
With all Adventure in his heart the first winged man arose.

Dropping gold, dropping gold, where the mists of morning
rolled,
On he kept his way undaunted, though his breaths were stabs
of cold,
Through the mystery of dawning that no mortal may behold.

Now he shouts, now he sings in the rapture of his wings,
And his great heart burns intenser with the strength of his
desire,
As he circles like a swallow, wheeling, flaming, gyre on gyre.

Gazing straight at the sun, half his pilgrimage is done,
And he staggers for a moment, hurries on, reels backward,
swerves
In a rain of scattered feathers as he falls in broken curves.

Icarus, Icarus, though the end is piteous,
Yet forever, yea forever, we shall see thee rising thus,
See the first supernal glory, not the ruin hideous.

You were Man, you who ran farther than our eyes can scan,
Man absurd, gigantic, eager for impossible Romance,
Overthrowing all Hell's legions with one warped and broken
lance.

On the highest steeps of Space he will have his dwelling-place
In those far, terrific regions where the cold comes down like
Death
Gleams the red glint of his pinions, smokes the vapor of his
breath.

Floating downward, very clear, still the echoes reach the ear
Of a little tune he whistles and a little song he sings,
Mounting, mounting still, triumphant, on his torn and broken
wings!

THE BALLAD OF WILLIAM SYCAMORE

(*1790-1871*)

My father, he was a mountaineer,
His fist was a knotty hammer;
He was quick on his feet as a running deer,
And he spoke with a Yankee stammer.

My mother, she was merry and brave,
And so she came to her labor,
With a tall green fir for her doctor grave
And a stream for her comforting neighbor.

And some are wrapped in the linen fine,
And some like a godling's scion;
But I was cradled on twigs of pine
In the skin of a mountain lion.

And some remember a white, starched lap
And a ewer with silver handles;
But I remember a coonskin cap
And the smell of bayberry candles.

The cabin logs, with the bark still rough,
And my mother who laughed at trifles,
And the tall, lank visitors, brown as snuff,
With their long, straight squirrel-rifles.

I can hear them dance, like a foggy song,
Through the deepest one of my slumbers,
The fiddle squeaking the boots along
And my father calling the numbers.

The quick feet shaking the puncheon-floor,
The fiddle squeaking and squealing,
Till the dried herbs rattled above the door
And the dust went up to the ceiling.

There are children lucky from dawn till dusk,
But never a child so lucky!
For I cut my teeth on "Money Musk"
In the Bloody Ground of Kentucky!

When I grew tall as the Indian corn,
My father had little to lend me,
But he gave me his great, old powder-horn
And his woodsman's skill to befriend me.

With a leather shirt to cover my back,
And a redskin nose to unravel
Each forest sign, I carried my pack
As far as a scout could travel.

Till I lost my boyhood and found my wife,
A girl like a Salem clipper!
A woman straight as a hunting-knife
With eyes as bright as the Dipper!

We cleared our camp where the buffalo feed,
Unheard-of streams were our flagons;
And I sowed my sons like apple-seed
On the trail of the Western wagons.

They were right, tight boys, never sulky or slow,
A fruitful, a goodly muster.
The eldest died at the Alamo.
The youngest fell with Custer.

The letter that told it burned my hand.
Yet we smiled and said, "So be it!"
But I could not live when they fenced the land,
For it broke my heart to see it.

I saddled a red, unbroken colt
And rode him into the day there;
And he threw me down like a thunderbolt
And rolled on me as I lay there.

The hunter's whistle hummed in my ear
As the city-men tried to move me,
And I died in my boots like a pioneer
With the whole wide sky above me.

Now I lie in the heart of the fat, black soil,
Like the seed of a prairie-thistle;
It has washed my bones with honey and oil
And picked them clean as a whistle.

And my youth returns, like the rains of Spring,
And my sons, like the wild-geese flying;
And I lie and hear the meadow-lark sing
And have much content in my dying.

Go play with the towns you have built of blocks
The towns where you would have bound me!
I sleep in my earth like a tired fox,
And my buffalo have found me.

"LOVE CAME BY FROM THE RIVERSMOKE"

(*From "John Brown's Body"*)

Love came by from the riversmoke,
   When the leaves were fresh on the tree,
But I cut my heart on the blackjack oak
   Before they fell on me.

The leaves are green in the early Spring,
   They are brown as linsey now,
I did not ask for a wedding-ring
   From the wind in the bending bough.

Fall lightly, lightly, leaves of the wild,
   Fall lightly on my care,
I am not the first to go with child
   Because of the blowing air.

I am not the first nor yet the last
  To watch a goosefeather sky,
And wonder what will come of the blast
  And the name to call it by.

Snow down, snow down, you whitefeather bird,
  Snow down, you winter storm,
Where the good girls sleep with a gospel word
  To keep their honor warm.

The good girls sleep in their modesty,
  The bad girls sleep in their shame,
But I must sleep in a hollow tree
  Till my child can have a name.

I will not ask for the wheel and thread
  To spin the labor plain,
Or the scissors hidden under the bed
  To cut the bearing-pain.

I will not ask for the prayer in church
  Or the preacher saying the prayer,
But I will ask the shivering birch
  To hold its arms in the air.

Cold and cold and cold again,
  Cold in the blackjack limb,
The winds in the sky for his sponsor-men
  And a bird to christen him.

Now listen to me, you Tennessee corn,
  And listen to my word,
This is the first child ever born
  That was christened by a bird.

He's going to act like a hound let loose
  When he comes from the blackjack tree,
And he's going to walk in proud shoes
  All over Tennessee.

I'll feed him milk out of my own breast
  And call him Whistling Jack.
And his dad'll bring him a partridge nest,
  As soon as his dad comes back.

SONG OF THE RIDERS

(*From "John Brown's Body"*)

The years ride out from the world like couriers gone to a throne
That is too far for treaty, or, as it may be, too proud;
The years marked with a star, the years that are skin and bone.
The years ride into the night like envoys sent to a cloud.

Perhaps they dismount at last, by some iron ring in the skies,
Dismount and tie their stallions and walk with an armored tread
Where an outlaw queen of the air receives strange embassies
Under a tree of wisdom between the quick and the dead.

Perhaps they are merely gone, as the white foam flies from the bit,
But the sparkling noise of their riding is ever in our ears.—
The men who came to the maze without foreknowledge of it,
The losers and the finders, under the riding years.

They pass, and the finders lose, the losers find for a space.
There are love and hate and delusion and all the tricks of the maze.
There are always losers and finders. There is no abiding place
And the years are unreturning. But, here and there, there were days.

Days when the sun so shone that the statue gave its cry
And a bird shook wings or a woman walked with a certain mirth,
When the staff struck out a spring from the leaves that had long been dry,
And the plow as before moved on from the hilltop, but its share had opened the earth.

So the bird is caught for an instant, and so the bird escapes.
The years are not halted by it. The losers and finders wait.
The years move on toward the sunset, the tall far-trafficking shapes,
Each with a bag of news to lay at a ghostly gate.

Riders shaking the heart with the hoofs that will not cease,
Will you never lie stretched in marble, the hands crossed over
the breast,
Some with hounds at your feet to show that you passed in
peace,
And some with your feet on lions? It is time that you were
at rest.

GEORGE O'NEIL

George O'Neil was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1898, and has lived there and in New York all of his life. He was one of the youngest editors of *The Measure* and his contributions to it were rarely without a neat if glancing touch.

His book of first poems, *The Cobbler in Willow Street,* was published in 1919. Although the dominant note is one of tentative fantasy O'Neil communicates an acrid *simplesse* in many of the lines. *The White Rooster* (1927) and *God Beguiled* (1929) are somewhat sharper though by no means angular. He continues to play delicately up and down the lyric scale; his touch is neither glassily *staccato* nor languorously *legato.* Within his limited octaves his performance is serene.

THE WHITE ROOSTER

Ah, God! To have a breast like that
To throw at day,
Thrust for the hands of dawn
To quiver and flare upon.

And a hook of gold to end you,
And a bloody flag sewn in your head,
And all yourself to arch,
And your soul a white cascade.

With yellow spirals,
Step, step, stalk,
And clutch reluctant loam,
Hard kernels and brown hens
In the brazen blue of noon.

Ah, God! Stab upward with your noise;
Tear at the sky.
With the day gone molten down his throat
And his spine a tilted flame,
What singer could not make one song
As fine as fire?

FABLE

I led him on into the frosted wood;
Stamping our feet, beneath a larch we stood,
Breathing white edifices on the air;
And nothing else was moving there.

The branches hung as if they had not known
A day when any little wind had blown.
The snow above our heads wrought wondrously
A thousand gargoyles on a tree.

Freezing, we waited by the frozen brook. . . .
"Listen" I said, and hardly dared to look.
A drift slid suddenly across the ice,
A frigid hawthorne trembled twice.

Then, slowly, through the branches, marble-veined,
A hoof, a haunch, a heavy shoulder, strained;
A head swung down into a glassy heap
And smashed it with a sideward sweep.

I could not hold my tongue: "You see the horn!
That twisted golden bone . . . the Unicorn!"
I could not hold it back. And as I spoke
A splintered universe awoke.

The thing was gone. "You saw." I spun around
To read his eyes. He kicked a knotted mound,
And all the gargoyles tumbled on his head.
"I'm numb, I'm going home," he said.

Malcolm Cowley was born August 24, 1898, at Belsano in the valley between Laurel Hill and Chestnut Ridge, Pennsylvania. He was educated in the Pittsburgh public schools, at Harvard University and the University of Montpellier. After going abroad he became identified for a while with the "left wing" group, helped edit "Secession," and contributed sporadically to the less popular magazines. Unrecognized as a creator, he became well known for his translations from the French, receiving especial praise for his version of Paul Valéry's *Variety* and Maurice Barrés' *The Sacred Hill.* It was not until his thirty-first year that he received serious appraisal as a critic and as an author of original gifts.

Blue Juniata (1929) traces, more or less chronologically, the genesis and growth of a poet. It begins in Cowley's west-central Pennsylvania and accompanies him on a fancied escape to Greenwich Village, through a further retreat (this time to Europe during the *Valuta* years of 1920-1924), a revulsion from self-imposed exile, to the final return. It has, therefore, the round development characteristic of the novel, a continuity and expansion one seldom finds in a book of poems. The changes of scene, moreover, are reflected in the changes of tone, attack, attitude. Thus the first and, in many ways, the best section is sensitive and even lyrical; the second records that sentimental attachment to the sordid which, appropriate to youth, is a feverish and inverted nostalgia; the third registers a natural though somewhat elegant scorn for the *Valutaschweine* and the unrealities of a life which "ceased to have any values, only prices"; the fourth is a mixed paean and protest, a reaction to the speeded-up, machine-jazz-driven, overstimulated metropolis of "lasting impermanences"; the fifth and concluding section is the coda, self-described by its subtitle "Old Melodies: Love and Death."

Here is the material for a searching work and, even in the most experimental pages, there is nothing superficial about Cowley. But, except in the first section and parts of the last, Cowley penetrates fewer surfaces than he leaves undisturbed. This is chiefly due to his method which is disruptive and to an idiom which is staccato and often feverish. Cowley himself is quick to forestall his critics, saying in one instance, "I have ceased to value many of these poems; their emotions and their technique are too impermanent," and in another, "Our writings . . . had other qualities that were more questionable—a sort of crooked sentiment, a self-protective smirk." Much of this is the poetry of adolescence, but the adolescent who was responsible for "Kelly's Barroom," "Nocturne," and "Free Clinic" could turn, a few years later, to expression as ripe as "Three Hills" and as simple-startling as "Two Swans."

The title-poem, "Mine No. 6" and "The Farm Died," are further advances. They mark, with increasing confidence, the poet's attempt to record the conflict between time and timelessness. The accents of Cummings, Aiken, Eliot, Laforgue, so loud in the early poems, are scarcely audible here. Even less influenced is the double sonnet "Winter" which emphasizes the authenticity of his gift.

BLUE JUNIATA

Farmhouses curl like horns of plenty, hide
lean paintless shanks against a barn, or crouch
empty in the shadow of a mountain. Here
there is no house at all—

Only the bones of a house,
lilacs growing beside them,
roses in clumps between them,
honeysuckle over;
a door, a crooked chimney,
mud-chinked, a yawning fireplace,
the skeleton of a pine;

a railroad thirty yards from the empty door.

I heard a railroad section-man playing on a jew's harp,
Where is now that merry party I remember long ago?
Nelly was a lady . . . twice . . . *Old Black Joe,*
as if he laid a hand upon my shoulder,
saying:
            "Your father lived here long ago;
your father's father built the house, lies buried
under the pine—"
                        Sing *Nelly was a lady*
. . . *Blue Juniata* . . . *Old Black Joe.*

For sometimes a familiar music hammers
like blood against the eardrums, paints a mist
across the eyes, as if the smell of lilac,
moss-roses and the past became a music
made visible, a monument of air.

THE FARM DIED

I watched the agony of a mountain farm,
a gangrenous decay:
the farm died with the pines that sheltered it;
the farm died when the woodshed rotted away.

It died to the beat of a loose board on the barn
that flapped in the wind all night;
nobody came to drive a nail in it.
The farm died in a broken window-light,

a broken pane upstairs in the guest bedroom,
through which the autumn rain
beat down all night upon the Turkey carpet;
nobody thought to putty in a pane.

Nobody nailed another slat on the corncrib;
nobody mowed the hay;
nobody came to mend the rusty fences.
The farm died when the two boys went away,

or maybe lived till the old man was buried,
but after it was dead I loved it more,
though poison sumac grew in the empty pastures,
though ridgepoles fell, and though November winds
came all night whistling through an open door.

MINE NO. 6

They scoured the hill with steel and living brooms
of fire, that nothing living might persist;
here crouch their cabins; here the tipple looms
uncompromising, black against the mist.

All day the wagons lumber past, the wide
squat wheels hub deep, the horses strained and still;
the headlong rain pours down all day to hide
the blackened stumps, the ulcerated hill.

Beauty, perfection, I have loved you fiercely
—even in this windy slum, where fear

drips from the eaves like August rain, and scarcely
a leaf sprouts, and a universe of pain
labors to bear its stillborn fruit—even here
. . . your long white cruel fingers at my brain.

WINTER: TWO SONNETS

I

The year swings over slowly, like a pilot
southward now driving from the cold and dark
toward vertical suns and days of briefer twilight
and lights less promptly lighted in the park,

more definite nights, and days more sharply ending.
. . . How shrouded, empty of voice, the streets appear
in these December dusks, their skies distending
till Snow falls at the turning of the year.

Only in a dead city one man waking,
who tried to read the city by the glow
of towers feebly luminous and seeking
God in the skies grown suddenly bright with snow,

who listened, till he heard the city speaking
in mortuary whispers to the snow.

II

When little daily winds have died away,
and turkeys climb to roost in the apple tree,
across the snow night creeps so gradually
no eye can mark the cornerstone of day.

Now tightly draw the blinds against the dark
and see in lamplight how the room awakes,
Listen . . . through the tangible silence breaks,
out of the woodlot, a dog-fox's bark.

A creak of rusty hinges in the wind:
his voice was like the rasping of a door,
and when it ceased the darkness instantly

became so hugely silent that behind
a final range of hills we heard the sea
growling with all his voices at the shore.

JOSEPH MONCURE MARCH

Joseph Moncure March was born July 27, 1899, in New York City. He attended Lawrenceville and graduated from Amherst in 1921. His experiences as a private in France during the War gave his later work an authenticity which sets it apart from false and facile jingoism.

It was not until the publication of *The Wild Party* (1928) that March embarked on a literary career. Although the volume was privately published, it reached an unusual public and excited controversy in England as well as America. This extended poem was followed by *The Set-Up* (1928) another long poem which, not limited to a special audience, established March's position as one of the most interesting of the younger poets. Both volumes vibrate with energy; the rhythm is extraordinarily supple; rhyme is used with almost explosive effect; the pace throughout is breathless. But although the speed is indubitable, it is not the outstanding feature. The characterizations, brusque and brilliant, often accomplished in two lines, show the author as one who registers poetry in syncopated condensations.

Although most of the critics admitted March's sharpness and power of projecting a swift story, they were more reserved in according him status as a poet. That he deserved the title was proved by the publication of *Fifteen Lyrics* (1929). The volume is seemingly a *volte face* in which March suddenly changes from a hard-hitting narrator to a pure singer. The change, however, was not due to any revulsion, for it was as a lyricist—although an unpublished one—that March began, all of the "new" poems having been written before the publication of *The Wild Party*. The same pictorial effectiveness with an unexpected sensitivity distinguish these casual songs and keep March from being placed in any superficial category. His performance is matched by his potentialities.

SUDDEN STORM

Under the seed of rain sowers
The streets burst into crystal flowers.
Papers flap torn, white
Wings in bewildered flight.

Black mushroom shapes walk
Each on a human stalk.
The sowers pass. The crystal crop
Vanishes. The fungi drop.
Strange fragrance is the sole token
Of enchantment made, enchantment broken.
Curtain. After a brief pause
Distant thunder stamps applause.

CHARITY

Last night a thin wind
Snuffed at my palms,
And whined like a beggar
Asking for alms.

So I took out and tossed him
An old letter
Which he carried off,
And we both felt better.

NOCTURNE

Silence. But the dark stirs
Uneasily. Like golden burrs
Lamps cling with slender bright
Barbs on the cloak of night.
Around the lamps, pale green
Leaves droop. Unseen
Blossoms throw a fine snare
Of fragrance on the still air.
With notes like opening flowers
Slow bells chime the hours.
Presently graves will yawn
And skeletons will walk till dawn.

CITY AUTUMN

The air breathes frost. A thin wind beats
Old dust and papers down gray streets
And blows brown leaves with curled-up edges
At frightened sparrows on window ledges.

A snow-flake falls like an errant feather:
A vagabond draws his cloak together,
And an old man totters past with a cane
Wondering if he'll see Spring again.

HELENE MULLINS

Helene Mullins was born July 12, 1899, at New Rochelle, New York, and was educated in convent boarding-schools. She wrote poems at the age of eleven and in 1922 began publishing in the magazines. She soon attracted attention in F. P. A.'s column, "The Conning Tower," where her poems appeared for several years on the average of more than one a week. In collaboration with her sister, Marie Gallagher, she published a novel, *Paulus Fy* (1924).

Earthbound and Other Poems (1929) shows that, technically, there is little that Miss Mullins cannot do; the range of her themes is matched by the dexterity of her forms. From a free lyric to the tightest of stanzas, she trips without losing a strict balance. She is at home in the rondeau, the ballade, the chant royal; she even writes a sestina which is not choked to death by its constricting repetitions. Her facility is both her charm and her handicap. All proceeds smoothly, self-confidently, without those little differences of *timbre* that distinguish one poet from another. One is never surprised by a daring metaphor—Miss Mullins's fancy progresses but it does not leap—one misses an unexpected image, a sudden color, a new sound. But if Miss Mullins is content to let the theme develop with practically no ornament, her gamut is lavish and in her verse the craftsman and the spontaneous singer find equal expression. Such poems as "Homecoming" and "Only the Self-Confident" are not ashamed to bear their truths undisguised.

Convent Girl (1929), written in sincere if undistinguished prose, is an obviously autobiographical record which occasioned no little comment, especially among the Catholic clergy.

Balm of Gilead, which appeared in 1930, continues to exhibit—and sometimes to exploit—Miss Mullins' facility.

THE POET RESOLVES TO BECOME A MEMBER OF SOCIETY

There was a time I could be satisfied
With blossoms I could tear from any bough.
There was a time when any grass beside
A singing stream was quite enough for me.

But now no more such simple things, but now,
Though it may not be forever, I am tired
Of all the quiet ways I once desired.
Though it may not be forever, I will be
A stranger to myself from this time out.
I will go in silks that whisper of my wealth
Among the rich; the gay shall talk about
My folly that is rasher than their own.
By wit and ingenuity and stealth,
I will gather friends from all the crowded places,
To mock my pride and imitate my graces;
And all shall know me, save myself alone.

HOMECOMING

After the fair, far places, this is best:
The well-known language and the labeled door,
The peace that waits for him who asks no more.
To be at home, to be no more a guest,
Though loved, though honored; forever to have turned
From pleasures mixed with mystery, and have come
Into one's own again—this is the sum
Of earthly good. Though we may be concerned
A little with the specious ecstasy
Of alien friendships, and believe the soul
Of beauty sleeps at some exotic goal
Beset by briars, we come inevitably,
Surfeited with our brilliant loneliness,
Back to the rich and simple commonplace,
Yield to the tyranny of law, retrace
The ever-flowering grounds. O measureless
The bounty of a universe wherein
One who has had his fill of glamor at last,
May travel back again and find the past,
And be at home among his kind and kin.

ONLY THE SELF-CONFIDENT

The anxious and distrustful constantly
Require that their companions speak their praise,
Holding it as a gross discourtesy
If any disagree with them or gaze

A little beyond the sanctuary where
They keep alight the lamps of egotism.
Upon their tongues the efficacious prayer,
Upon their thumbs alone the sacred chrism.

Only the stern self-confident can hold
Their peace amidst the clamor, nor betray
Their capabilities; can sit unmoved,
With all around them trembling to have told
The utmost of their merits; only they
Can bear to leave their strength unguessed, unproved.

LÉONIE ADAMS

Léonie Adams was born in Brooklyn, New York, December 9, 1899. After a public school preparation she became a member of the class of 1922 at Barnard College, supported herself in New York in various capacities for five years, was awarded a "traveling fellowship" by the Guggenheim Foundation, and went abroad for two years in 1928. At Barnard she wrote her first published poems "in secret." While still an undergraduate, her remarkable "April Mortality" was printed in *The New Republic*, but, although this would have been sufficient stimulus for most young authors to rush into print, Miss Adams remained more reticent than ever and rarely submitted any of her verse for publication.

It was only through the persuasion of two or three friends that her volume, *Those Not Elect* (1925), was made ready for the press. The author's evasion of "realism" is apparent in all of her poetry. The poems themselves are of two sorts: the younger and simpler verses, full of a shy ecstasy, and the later, more metaphysical expressions of a rare and not lightly communicated wonder. Without imitating the Elizabethans, Miss Adams has caught something of the quality of Webster and Vaughan. But whatever her style, whether she is direct as in "Home-Coming" or more difficult as in "The Horn," her sensitivity makes even the obscure passages a succession of inevitable images. Her most candid descriptions take on an unearthly and intensified air; even her statement of a landscape, or the performance of a tragedy, or "the pointed grass" drinking the light "till light brimmed even," or the old cheating of the sun is translated in lines both pure and suggestive. One may mistake her meaning; there is no mistaking the beauty of her imagination which lifts emotion, holding it, as it were, in suspense. There is not a line in her first book which is without distinction.

The same is true of *High Falcon* (1929). This is abstract poetry in the highest sense; the word is more than a word; the letter is uplifted by pure spirit. The lyrical line, carried on wave after wave of music, transcends personality. The ecstasy, however, is no less ecstatic for being disembodied; every phrase carries its import of intensities, of vistas larger than the scene, of meaning beyond meaning. It is a rarified atmosphere which Miss Adams breathes and only a height-loving reader can venture with her into that fine air. "Twilit Revelation," "Bell Tower," "Sundown," "Country Summer" are a few of the poems in which the heart "extracts the spirit of the temporal." Neither sense nor the senses can wholly interpret this poetry, but every figure and accent compel us with authority. What, at first glance, seems obscurely metaphysical is resolved into a spiritual clarity that approaches clairvoyance. Here, we are in the presence of greatness; here matter is sanctified, "dipped in a gold stain."

This is not to imply that Miss Adams' is a purple-patched poetry. Her utterance is unique, but it is no posture of "difference," no straining singularity. On the contrary, this is verse of the most reticent dignity, in which nothing, not even the mystical note, is overstressed. Herein lies Miss Adams' danger—or rather the danger to her imitators, for, since she is obviously "a poet's poet," imitated she will be. The surface pattern is easy enough to master: the withdrawn loveliness, the muted music, the faint Elizabethanism; but, lacking her rapt and actually reverent touch, the result would be only an echo of delicate diction. Miss Adams would undoubtedly gain a wider audience were she to mix a little more flesh with her spirit, but she would lose that virginal radiance which rises from springs more profound than those of the too nimbly gushing heart.

APRIL MORTALITY

Rebellion shook an ancient dust,
  And bones bleached dry of rottenness
Said: Heart, be bitter still, nor trust
  The earth, the sky, in their bright dress.

Heart, heart, dost thou not break to know
  This anguish thou wilt bear alone?
We sang of it an age ago,
  And traced it dimly upon stone.

With all the drifting race of men
  Thou also art begot to mourn
That she is crucified again,
  The lonely Beauty yet unborn.

And if thou dreamest to have won
  Some touch of her in permanence,
'Tis the old cheating of the sun,
  The intricate lovely play of sense.

Be bitter still, remember how
  Four petals, when a little breath
Of wind made stir the pear-tree bough,
  Blew delicately down to death.

HOME-COMING

When I stepped homeward to my hill
  Dusk went before with quiet tread;
The bare laced branches of the trees
  Were as a mist about its head.

Upon its leaf-brown breast, the rocks
  Like great gray sheep lay silent-wise;
Between the birch trees' gleaming arms
  The faint stars trembled in the skies.

The white brook met me half-way up
  And laughed as one that knew me well,
To whose more clear than crystal voice
  The frost had joined a crystal spell.

The skies lay like pale-watered deep.
  Dusk ran before me to its strand
And cloudily leaned forth to touch
  The moon's slow wonder with her hand.

THOUGHT'S END

I watched the hills drink the last color of light,
All shapes grow bright and wane on the pale air.
Till down the traitorous east there came the night,
And swept the circle of my seeing bare.

Its intimate beauty like a wanton's veil
Tore from the void as from an empty face.
I felt at being's rim all being fail,
And my one body pitted against space.
O heart more frightened than a wild bird's wings,
Beating at green, now is no fiery mark
Left on the quiet nothingness of things.
Be self no more against the flooding dark:
There thousandwise sown in that cloudy blot
Stars that are worlds look out and see you not.

DEATH AND THE LADY

Their bargain told again

Death to the Lady said
While she to dancing-measures still
Would move, while beauties on her lay,
Simply as dews the buds do fill,
Death said: "Stay!
Tell me, Lady,
If in your breast the lively breath
May flicker for a little space,
What ransom will you give to death,
Lady?" he said.
"O not one joy, O not one grace,
And what is your will to my will?
I can outwit parched fancies still."
To Death said the Lady.

Death to that Lady said,
When blood went numb and wearily,
"In innocency dear breath you drew,
And marrow and bloom you rendered me,"
She said: "True."
"How now, Lady?"
"My heart sucked up its sweet at will,
Whose scent when substance' sweet is past,
Is lovely still, is lovely still,
Death," she said.
"For bones' reprieve the dreams go last:
Soon, soon your flowery show did part,

But preciously I cull the heart,"
Death said the Lady.

Death to that Lady said:
"Is then not all our bargain done?
Or why do you beckon me so fast
To chaffer for a skeleton
Flesh must cast,
Ghostly Lady?"
"For, Death, that I would have you drain
From my dead heart the blood that stands
So chilly in the withered vein.
And, Death," she said,
"Give my due bones into your hands."
"Beauties I claim at morning-prime,
But the lack-luster in good time."
Death said to the Lady.

TWILIT REVELATION

This hour was set the time for heaven's descent
Come drooping toward us on the heavy air,
The sky, that's heaven's seat above us bent,
Blue faint as violet-ash, you near me there
In nether space so drenched in goblin blue,
I could touch Hesperus as soon as you.

Now I perceive you lapt in singling light,
Washed by that blue which sucks whole planets in,
And hung like those top jewels of the night,
A mournful gold too high for love to win.
And you, poor brief, poor melting star, you seem
Half sunk, and half to brighten in that stream.

And these rich-bodied hours of our delight
Show like a moth-wing's substance when the fall
Of confine-loosing, blue unending night
Extracts the spirit of this temporal.
So space can pierce the crevice wide between
Fast hearts, skies deep-descendèd intervene.

GHOSTLY TREE

O beech, unbind your yellow leaf, for deep
The honeyed time lies sleeping, and lead shade
Seals up the eyelids of its golden sleep.
Long are your flutes, chimes, little bells at rest,
And here is only the cold scream of the fox,
Only the hunter following on the hound,
And your quaint-plumagèd,
The bird that your green happy boughs lapped round,
Bends south its soft bright breast.

Before the winter and the terror break,
Scatter the leaf that broadened with the rose,
Not for a tempest, but a sigh to take.
Four nights to exorcise the thing that stood,
Bound by these frail which dangle at your branch,
They ran a frosty dagger to its heart,
And it, wan substance,
No more remembered it might cry, or start,
Or stain a point with blood.

THE HORN

In coming to the feast I found
A venerable silver-throated horn,
Which were I brave enough to sound,
Then all as from that moment born
Would breathe the honey of this clime,
And three times merry in their time,
Would praise the virtue of that horn.

The mist is risen like thin breath,
The young leaves of the ground smell chill,
So faintly are they strewn on death,
The road I came down a west hill.
But none can name as I can name
A little golden-bright thing flame,
Since bones have caught their marrow chill.

And in a thicket passed me by,
In the black brush a running hare,
Having a specter in his eye,
That sped in darkness to the snare;
And who but I can know in pride,
The heart set beating in the side
Has but the wisdom of a hare?

THE RIVER IN THE MEADOWS

Crystal parting the meads,
A boat drifted up it like a swan,
Tranquil, lovely, its bright front to the waters,
A slow swan is gone.

Full waters, O flowing silver,
Pure, level with the clover,
It will stain drowning a star,
With the moon it will brim over.

Running through lands dewy and shorn,
Cattle stoop at its brink,
And every fawny-colored throat
Will sway its bells and drink.

I saw a boat sailing the river
With a tranced gait; it seemed
Loosed by a spell from its moorings,
Or a thing the helmsman dreamed.

They said it would carry no traveler,
But the vessel would go down,
If a heart were heavy-winged,
Or the bosom it dwelt in, stone.

COUNTRY SUMMER

Now the rich cherry whose sleek wood
And top with silver petals traced,
Like a strict box its gems encased,
Has split from out that cunning lid,
All in an innocent green round,
Those melting rubies which it hid;

With moss ripe-strawberry-encrusted,
So birds get half, and minds lapse merry
To taste that deep-red lark's-bite berry,
And blackcap-bloom is yellow-dusted.

The wren that thieved it in the eaves
A trailer of the rose could catch
To her poor droopy sloven thatch,
And side by side with the wren's brood,—
O lovely time of beggars' luck—
Opens the quaint and hairy bud.
And full and golden is the yield
Of cows that never have to house,
But all night nibble under boughs,
Or cool their sides in the moist field.

Into the rooms flow meadow airs,
The warm farm-baking smell blows round;
Inside and out and sky and ground
Are much the same; the wishing star,
Hesperus, kind and early-born,
Is risen only finger-far.
All stars stand close in summer air,
And tremble, and look mild as amber;
When wicks are lighted in the chamber
You might say stars were settling there.

Now straightening from the flowery hay,
Down the still light the mowers look;
Or turn, because their dreaming shook,
And they waked half to other days,
When left alone in yellow-stubble,
The rusty-coated mare would graze.
Yet thick the lazy dreams are born;
Another thought can come to mind,
But like the shivering of the wind,
Morning and evening in the corn.

BELL TOWER

I have seen, O desolate one, the voice has its tower,
The voice also, builded at secret cost,
Its temple of precious tissue; not silent then,
Forever. Casting silence in your hour.

There marble boys are leant from the light throat,
Thick locks that hang with dew, and eyes dew-lashed,
Dazzled with morning,—angels of the wind,
With ear a-point for the enchanted note.

And these at length shall tip the hanging bell,
And first the sound must gather in deep bronze,
Till, rarer than ice, purer than a bubble of gold,
It fill the sky to beat on an airy shell.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Bleak the February light
On the dark threshold spread,
The frost stood thick against the lock,
The clock for the great cold stopped dead,
When old wits idle with their luck
Lay singing in the bed,
That heard, while white frost span by night,
A pigeon happy with its bread.

And sang: I wakened to a sound
Which the streams make at thaw,
And pity on the shape I found
Inside a looking-glass with light.
For looking on my heart I saw,
A time before the break of day,
And looking won to second-sight,
And cast my character away.

The fields lie bound beneath the sky,
The hedge-top and the furrow freeze,
And still old plow-wheels sigh,
As sweet as bones which stretch from sleep,

And sooner than their sound is by,
Will come a noise of yellow bees
When the hay is nodding deep,
And some wise throat that laughs for ease.

Till there was a soft voice which spoke:
Hush, for every sound you tell
Is out of an old horn I blew.
I have come down to see who woke
On earth's cold brink when night was through.
No wilder chance befell,
Than the starry breath I drew.
I am Gabriel.

SUNDOWN

This is the time lean woods shall spend
A steeped-up twilight, and the pale evening drink,
And the perilous roe, the leaper to the west brink,
Trembling and bright, to the caverned cloud descend.

Now shall you see pent oak gone gusty and frantic,
Stooped with dry weeping, ruinously unloosing
The sparse disheveled leaf, or reared and tossing
A dreary scarecrow bough in funeral antic.

Aye, tatter you and rend,
Oak heart, to your profession mourning, not obscure
The outcome, not crepuscular, on the deep floor,
Sable and gold match lusters and contend.

And rags of shrouding will not muffle the slain.
This is the immortal extinction, the priceless wound
Not to be staunched; the live gold leaks beyond,
And matter's sanctified, dipped in a gold stain.

NIGHT-PIECE

The moon above the milky field
Gleaning moves her one slant light,
The wind weeps from the cloud:
Then, weeping wind, unshroud

Pale Cassiopeia, blow
The true-swung pole-lamp bright.
To this room a midnight's come
Which speaks but with the beating clock,
While on glistening paws the mouse
Creeps night-master of the house.
Rust shall eat away the lock,
The door sag from the garner hoard,
And the sleeper lie unsphered.
Time's wheel frets on his finger still,
He bends no more his weight with time's.
He wept as long as wind,
And sleeps with an indifferent will.
Not airs, not climes unclose, behind
The lashes' scarcely faltering jet,
Which star he sees since Hesper set.

LULLABY

Hush, lullay,
Your treasures all
        Encrust with rust.
Your trinket pleasures
        Fall
To dust.
Beneath the sapphire arch
Upon the grassy floor
Is nothing more
        To hold,
And play is over old.
Your eyes
        In sleepy fever gleam,
Your lids droop
        To their dream.
You wander late alone,
The flesh frets on the bone,
Your love fails
        In your breast.
Here is the pillow.
        Rest.

Allen Tate (whose full name, not often admitted, is John Orley Allen Tate) was born, on November 19, 1899, in Fairfax County, Virginia, and was reared in Kentucky and Tennessee (alternately, so that to Tennesseeans he says he is a Kentuckian, and to Kentuckians, a Tennesseean), was educated in public and private schools in Louisville, Nashville, and Washington, D. C., and after some tergiversation was graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1922. Immediately thereafter, he engaged in free-lance literary criticism for which he is as well known as for his poetry. He was one of the founders, in 1922, of *The Fugitive*, sharing that distinction with John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson and a few others. An avowed believer in sectionalism, his critical acumen runs parallel to his predilections in *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier* (1928) and *Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall* (1929). Both biographies are skillfully constructed mosaics of fact and interpretation. His reviews and essays are among the most brilliant and provocative of his generation.

Mr. Pope and Other Poems (1928) reveals a mind that is critical and complex. His Ignis Fatuus, as acknowledged in Tate's Epilogue has a "fierce latinity," and the adjective gives us an inkling of the paradox at the heart of his verse. Here Donne wrestles with Vergil; an essentially Gothic foundation shoots up into baroque efflorescences; the cultural tradition battles with vulgar aggressiveness. This clash between classicism and modernity—sublimated by Tate's transposition of romantic South and realistic North—strains to achieve a kind of harassed unity in *Mr. Pope and Other Poems.* A finesse of satire and a dissection of emotion combine to place most of the volume in the literature of wit, but poems like "Death of Little Boys" and "Ode to the Confederate Dead" are compact with feeling and so escape the category. The more mature *Poems, 1928-1931* appeared in 1932.

The verse which Tate has written subsequent to *Mr. Pope,* of which "Mother and Son" is a brilliant example, owes less to the intellectualist's conflict. Structure is still preëminent, but Tate emphasizes his form without being preoccupied with it. His method, as he himself has acknowledged, consists in playing the rôle of a hawk "gradually circling round the subject, threatening it and filling it with suspense, and finally accomplishing its demise without ever quite using the ultimate violence upon it." Always suggestive, keenly individualized, the graver poems—and many of his essays—are complete realizations of this method.

In 1930, after two years abroad on a Guggenheim Foundation award, Tate returned to Tennessee, to the town of Clarksville on the Cumberland River.

ODE TO THE CONFEDERATE DEAD

(*1861-1865*)

Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones barter their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs broken leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
Against the sinkage of death;
Then, in uncertainty of their election,
Of their business in the vast breath,
They sough the rumor of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot
Of a thousand acres where these memories grow.
Think of the autumns that have come and gone,
Ambitious Novembers with the humors of the year,
With a particular zeal for every slab,
Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot
On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:
The brute curiosity of an angel's stare
Turns you, like them, to stone,
Transforms the heaving air,
Till plunged to a heavier world below
You shift your sea-space blindly, like a crab.

You know, who have waited by the wall,
The twilit certainty of an animal,
Those midnight restitutions of the blood
You know, the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze
Of the sky, the sudden call; you know the rage
Of Heraclitus and Parmenides.
You who have waited for the angry resolution
Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow,
You know the unimportant shrift of death
And praise the vision
And praise the immodest circumstance
Of those who fall
Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision—
Here at this stile, once more, you see them all.

Turn your eyes into the immoderate past,
Find there the inscrutable infantry rising,
The demons out of the earth; they will not last.
Stonewall, Stonewall; and the sunken fields of hemp;
Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run;
In the orient of that economy
You have cursed the setting sun.

You hear the shout; the crazy hemlocks point
With troubled fingers to the silence which
Engulfs you like a mummy in time, whose niche
Lacks aperture.

Now that the salt of their blood
Stiffens the saltier oblivion of the sea,
Seals the malignant purity of the flood,
What shall we, who count our days and bow
Our heads with a commemorial woe,
In the ribboned coats of grim felicity,
What shall we say of the dirty sons
Whose legs and arms, guts, heads and teeth
Stretched out the justice of efficiency?
The gray lean spiders come; they come and go.
In a tangle of willows without light
The singular screech-owl's tight
Invisible lyric seeds the mind
With the furious murmur of their chivalry.

We have not sung, we shall not ever sing
In the improbable mist of nightfall
Which flies on multiple wing;
It has only a beginning and an end;
And in between the ends of distraction
Lurks mute speculation, the patient curse
That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps
For the jaguar's image in a jungle pool, his victim.

What shall we say who have knowledge
Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act
To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave
In the house? The ravenous grave?

Leave now
The turnstile and the decomposing wall:
The gentle serpent, green in the mulberry bush,
Riots with his tongue through the hush.
See him, what he knows—he knows it all!

MR. POPE

When Alexander Pope strolled in the city
Strict was the glint of pearl and gold sedans.
Ladies leaned out, more out of fear than pity;
For Pope's tight back was rather a goat's than man's.

One often thinks the urn should have more bones
Than skeletons provide for speedy dust;
The urn gets hollow, cobwebs brittle as stones
Weave to the funeral shell a frivolous rust.

And he who dribbled couplets like the snake
Coiled to a lithe precision in the sun,
Is missing. The jar is empty; you may break
It only to find that Mr. Pope is gone.

What requisitions of a verity
Prompted the wit and rage between his teeth
One cannot say: around a crooked tree
A mortal climbs whose name should be a wreath.

DEATH OF LITTLE BOYS

When little boys grow patient at last, weary,
Surrender their eyes immeasurably to the night,
The event will rage terrific as the sea;
Their bodies fill a crumbling room with light.

Then you will touch at the bedside, torn in two,
Gold curls now deftly intricate with gray
As the windowpane extends a fear to you
From one peeled aster drenched with the wind all day.

And over his chest the covers, in an ultimate dream,
Will mount to the teeth, ascend the eyes, press back
The locks—while round his sturdy belly gleam
The suspended breaths, white spars above the wreck:

Till all the guests, come in to look, turn down
Their palms; and delirium assails the cliff
Of Norway where you ponder, and your little town
Reels like a sailor drunk in his rotten skiff. . . .

The bleak sunshine shrieks its chipped music then
Out to the milkweed amid the fields of wheat.
There is a calm for you where men and women
Unroll the chill precision of moving feet.

MOTHER AND SON

Now all day long the man who is not dead
Hastens the dark with inattentive eyes,
The lady of the white hand, of the erect head,
Stares at the floor, leans for the son's replies
At last to her importunate womanhood,
That hand of death laid on the living bed—
Such is the fierce compositor of blood.

She waits; he dozes on the bed of sin
Where greed, avarice, anger hatched and slept
Till to their silence they were gathered in:
There, fallen with time, his wicked kin
Writhed to the passions that were never kept
In the permanent heart; and there his mother lay,
A battered marble, on his first birthday.

Fallen with time, she cannot will her hand
Up to the bed, nor break the manacle
That exile sets upon her harsh command
That he should say the time is beautiful,
Transfigured by her own devouring light:
The sick man craves the impalpable night.

Loosed betwixt eye and lid, the swimming beams
Of memory—that school of cuttlefish—
Rise to the air, plunge into the cold streams:
Rising and plunging the half-forgotten wish
To tear his heart out in some slow disgrace,
And freeze the hue of terror to her face.

Hate, misery, and fear beat off his heart
To the dry fury of the woman's mind:
The son, prone in his autumn, moves apart—
A burning seed tossed to the aimless wind.
O child, be vigilant! till towards the south,
On the flowered wall all the sweet afternoon,
That reach of sun, swift as the cottonmouth,
Strikes at the black crucifix on her breast,
Where the cold dusk comes suddenly to rest.
Mortality will speak the victor soon!

The dreary flies, lazy and casual,
Stick to the ceiling, buzz along the wall:
O heart! the spider shuffles from the mold
Between the pinks and grapes weaving his pall!
The bright wallpaper never will be old,
Peeling and curling . . . will never fall.

THE CROSS

There is a place that some men know,
I cannot see the whole of it,
Nor how men come there. Long ago
Flame burst out of a secret pit
Crushing the world with such a light
The day sky fell to moonless black,
The kingly sun to hateful night
For those, once seeing, turning back:
For love so hates mortality,
Which is the providence of life,
She will not let it blessèd be
But curses it with mortal strife,

Until beside the blinding rood
Within that world-destroying pit
—Like young wolves that have tasted blood,
Of death, men taste no more of it:
So blind in so severe a place
(All life before in the black grave)
The last alternatives they face
Of life, without the life to save,
Being from all salvation weaned—
A stag charged both at heel and head:
Who would come back is turned a fiend
Instructed by the fiery dead.

HART CRANE

Hart Crane was born in Garrettsville, Ohio, in 1899 and educated in the public schools of his state. Avoiding college, he worked in the ranks of advertising copywriters, chiefly in Cleveland and New York. In his early twenties his poetry—incomprehensible to some, extraordinary to others—began to appear in the more radical magazines.

White Buildings (1926) is obviously founded on rhetoric, but rhetoric of a new order. Influenced by Rimbaud, Poe, and Wallace Stevens—poets devoted to tonal gradations and color-values of words—Hart Crane's verbal ingenuity is often as accomplished as theirs.

Sometimes he transcends ingenuity, striking out phrases as felicitous as "Where the cedar leaf divides the sky" and "In sapphire arenas of the hills." But *White Buildings* is the record of esthetic as well as emotional conflict. Alternating between actual delineation and complete departure from representation, the verse approximates without quite achieving an "absolute" poetry. Romantic in inception, its gestures are larger than itself; as Allen Tate hints in his introduction, Crane has not yet discovered a theme to embody his uncoördinated visions.

In *The Bridge* (1930) the theme has been found. A set of disparate poems has been integrated by vital figures and national myths. The sense of time flows like a leading theme through variations in which Pocahontas, Rip Van Winkle, and the Subway are not isolated legends but significantly related phenomena. Crane's style has undergone only a slight change, but that change, necessitated by the larger work, is important. Surprise and a romantic strangeness are still principles of his work, but discipline controls singularity; the mystical rhetoric now plays about a central organization.

Crane's influences have not been wholly discarded; one does not have to look far to recognize the color-suggestions of Stevens and the contrast-methods of Pound and Eliot. Yet it is equally evident that Crane is not spiritually persuaded by any of these, but rather by poets who might be thought their opposites. His visions—his very mottoes—are those of Blake, the Book of Job, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman. It is the spirit of Whitman, the spirit of "competent loam, the probable grass," which is apotheosized on a rising cadence and lifts a broken but finally sustained passion to prophetic rhapsody.

There will be those who will find Crane's poetry not merely tangential but cryptic. The difficulty is caused by his combination of allusiveness and allegory, especially since the allusions are often remote and the allegorical symbols personal to the point of privacy. But what Crane loses in directness he gains in implication; he has perfected a rounded locution from which the meaning is always sliding off and yet maintaining something more than the surface meaning. It is a triumph of suggestiveness, an exact inexactitude. *The Bridge,* in its lofty reach and inclusive intention, carries the rhetorician beyond himself and approaches—if such a thing is possible—a highly sophisticated, highly syncopated local epic.

After a chaotic life, he committed suicide by jumping from a steamer in the Gulf of Mexico, April 28, 1932.

VAN WINKLE

Macadam, gun-gray as the tunny's belt,
Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate:
Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds—
Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds.

Times earlier, when you hurried off to school,
—It is the same hour though a later day—
You walked with Pizarro in a copybook,
And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in—
Firmly as coffee grips the taste,—and away!

There was Priscilla's cheek close in the wind,
And Captain Smith, all beard and certainty,
And Rip Van Winkle, bowing by the way,—
"Is this Sleepy Hollow, friend—?" And he—

And Rip forgot the office hours,
and he forgot the pay;
Van Winkle sweeps a tenement
down town on Avenue A,—

The grind-organ says . . . Remember, remember
The cinder pile at the end of the backyard
Where we stoned the family of young
Garter snakes under . . . And the monoplanes
We launched—with paper wings and twisted
Rubber bands. . . . Recall—

the rapid tongues
That flittered from under the ash heap day
After day whenever your stick discovered
Some sunning inch of unsuspecting fiber—
It flashed back at your thrust, as clean as fire.

And Rip was slowly made aware
that he, Van Winkle, was not here
Nor there. He woke and swore he'd seen Broadway
a Catskill daisy chain in May—

So memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box,
Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass—
Is it the whip stripped from the lilac tree
One day in spring my father took to me,
Or is it the Sabbatical, unconscious smile
My mother almost brought me once from church
And once only, as I recall—?

It flickered through the snow screen, blindly
It forsook her at the doorway; it was gone
Before I had left the window. It
Did not return with the kiss in the hall.

Macadam, gun-gray as the tunny's belt,
Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate . . .
Keep hold of that nickel for car-change, Rip,—
Have you got your paper—?
And hurry along, Van Winkle—it's getting late!

ROYAL PALM

Green rustlings, more-than-regal charities
Drift coolly from that tower of whispered light.
Amid the noontide's blazed asperities
I watched the sun's most gracious anchorite

Climb up as my communings, year on year
Uneaten of the earth or aught earth holds,
And the gray trunk, that's elephantine, rear
Its frondings sighing in aetherial folds.

Forever fruitless, and beyond that yield
Of sweat the jungle presses with hot love
And tendril till our deathward breath is sealed—
It grazes the horizons, launched above

Mortality—ascending emerald-bright,
A fountain at salute, a crown in view—
Unshackled, casual of its azured height
As though it soared suchwise through heaven too.

THE TUNNEL

To find the Western path
Right thro' the Gates of Wrath
—BLAKE.

Performances, assortments, résumés—
Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
Refractions of the thousand theaters, faces—
Mysterious kitchens . . . You shall search them all.
Some day by heart you'll learn each famous sight
And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;
You'll find the garden in the third act dead,
Finger your knees—and wish yourself in bed
With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight.

Then let you reach your hat
and go.

As usual, let you—also
walking down—exclaim
to twelve upward leaving
a subscription praise
for what time slays . . .

Or can't you quite make up your mind to ride;
A walk is better underneath the L for a brisk
Ten blocks or so before? But you find yourself
Preparing penguin flexions of the arms—
As usual you will meet the scuttle yawn:
The subway yawns the quickest promise home.

Be minimum then, to swim the hiving swarms
Out of the Square, the Circle burning bright—
Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right,
Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright
—Quite unprepared rush naked back to light:
And down beside the turnstile press the coin
Into the slot. The gongs already rattle.

And so
of cities you bespeak
subways, rivered under streets
and rivers . . . In the car
the overtone of motion
underground, the monotone
of motion is the sound
of other faces, also underground—

'Let's have a pencil Jimmy—living now
at Floral Park
Flatbush—on the fourth of July—
like a pigeon's muddy dream—potatoes
to dig in the field—travlin' the town too—
night after night—the Culver line—the
girls all shaping up—it used to be—'

Our tongues recant like beaten weather vanes.
This answer lives like verdigris, like hair
Beyond extinction, surcease of the bone;
And repetition freezes—'What

'what do you want? getting weak on the links?
fandaddle daddy don't ask for change—IS THIS
FOURTEENTH? it's half-past six she said—if
you don't like my gate why did you
swing on it, why *didja*
swing on it
anyhow—'

And somehow anyhow swing—

The phonographs of hades in the brain
Are tunnels that re-wind themselves, and love—
A burnt match skating in a urinal
Somewhere above Fourteenth TAKE THE EXPRESS
To brush some new presentiment of pain—

'But I want service in this office SERVICE
I said—after
the show she cried a little afterwards but—'

Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap?
Whose body smokes along the bitten rails,
Bursts from a smoldering bundle far behind
In back forks of the chasms of the brain—
Puffs from a riven stump far out behind
In interborough fissures of the mind . . . ?

And why do I often meet your visage here,
Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on
Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?
—And did their riding eyes right through your side,
And did their eyes like unwashed platters ride?
And Death, aloft—gigantically down
Probing through you toward me, O Evermore!
And when they dragged your retching flesh,
Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore—
That last night on the ballot rounds, did you,
Shaking—did you deny the ticket, Poe?

For Gravesend Manor change at Chambers Street.
The platform hurries along to a dead stop.

The intent escalator lifts a serenade
Stilly
Of shoes, umbrellas, each eye attending its shoe, then
Bolting outright somewhere above where streets
Burst suddenly in rain . . . The gongs recur:
Elbows and levers, guard and hissing door.
Thunder is galvothermic here below . . . The car
Wheels off. The train rounds, bending to a scream,
Taking the final level for the dive
Under the river—

And somewhat emptier than before,
Demented, for a hitching second, humps; then
Lets go . . . Toward corners of the floor
Newspapers wing, revolve and wing.
Blank windows gargle signals through the roar.

And does the Daemon take you home, also,
Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair?
After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors—
The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare,
O Genoese, do you bring mother-eyes and hands
Back home to children and to golden hair?

Daemon, demurring and eventful yawn!
Whose hideous laughter is the bellows mirth
—Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth—
O cruelly to inoculate the brinking dawn
With antennae toward worlds that spark and sink—
To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
Locution of the eldest star, and pack
The conscience naveled in the plunging wind,
Umbilical to call—and straightway die!
O caught like pennies beneath soot and steam,
Kiss of our agony thou gatherest;
Condensed, thou takest all—shrill ganglia
Impassioned with some song we fail to keep.
And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope,
The sod and billow breaking—lifting ground,
—A sound of waters bending astride the sky
Unceasing with some word that will not die!

. . . .

A tugboat, wheezing wreaths of steam,
Lunged past, with one galvanic blare stove up the river.
I counted the echoes assembling, one after one,
Searching, thumbing the midnight on the piers.
Lights, coasting left the oily tympanum of waters;
The blackness somewhere gouged glass on a sky.

And this thy harbor, O my City, I have driven under,
Tossed from the coil of ticking towers . . . Tomorrow,
And to be . . . Here by the River that is East—
Here at the waters' edge the hands drop memory;
Shadowless in that abyss they unaccounting lie.
How far away the star has pooled the sea—
Or shall the hands be drawn away, to die?

Kiss of our agony Thou gatherest,
O Hand of Fire
gatherest—

VOYAGES

Where icy and bright dungeons lift
Of swimmers their lost morning eyes,
And ocean rivers, churning, shift
Green borders under stranger skies,

Steadily as a shell secretes
Its beating leagues of monotone,
Or as many waters trough the sun's
Red kelson past the cape's wet stone;

O rivers mingling toward the sky
And harbor of the phoenix' breast—
My eyes pressed black against the prow,
—Thy derelict and blinded guest

Waiting, afire, what name, unspoke,
I cannot claim: let thy waves rear
More savage than the death of kings,
Some splintered garland for the seer.

Beyond siroccos harvesting
The solstice thunders, crept away,
Like a cliff swinging or a sail
Flung into April's inmost day—

Creation's blithe and petaled word
To the lounged goddess when she rose
Conceding dialogue with eyes
That smile unsearchable repose—

Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,
—Unfolded floating dais before
Which rainbows twine continual hair—
Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!

The imaged word, it is, that holds
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.
It is the unbetrayable reply
Whose accent no farewell can know.

THE AIR PLANT

(*Grand Cayman, W. I.*)

This tuft that thrives on saline nothingness,
Inverted octopus with heavenward arms
Thrust parching from a palm-bole hard by the cove—
A bird almost—of almost bird alarms,

Is pulmonary to the wind that jars
Its tentacles, horrific in their lurch.
The lizard's throat, held bloated for a fly,
Balloons but warily from this throbbing perch.

The needles and hacksaws of cactus bleed
A milk of earth when stricken off the stalk;
But this—defenseless, thornless, sheds no blood,
Scarce shadow even—but the air's thin talk.

Angelic Dynamo! Ventriloquist of the Blue!
While beachward creeps the shark-swept Spanish Main.
By what conjunctions do the winds appoint
Its apotheosis, at last—the hurricane!

Langston Hughes was born February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. He was brought up in cities in the Middle West, was graduated from Central High School in Cleveland and at eighteen became a teacher of English in Mexico, where he lived for a year and a half. He spent a year at Columbia University and some time as a worker on the high seas. Hughes' next move was a foreign hegira, going to Paris in midwinter with seven dollars in his pocket. He stayed in France ten months, worked his way through Italy and Spain, and returned to New York with twenty-five cents. Working as a busboy in Washington, he was discovered by Vachel Lindsay, who read several of his poems to a fashionable audience in the very hotel in which Hughes carried trays of dishes. This incident attracted the attention of the press of the country, and people who never would have glanced at the poetry for its own sake became interested in the career of so strange a singer.

The Weary Blues, Hughes' first volume, appeared in January, 1926. One of the poems had already won first prize in a contest conducted by *Opportunity*, a magazine which did great service in fostering creative work by negroes. Hughes' poetry appearing at the same time as Countée Cullen's justified those who claimed we were witnessing a revival of Negro art. Among the whites, Eugene O'Neill, Waldo Frank, Sherwood Anderson and Carl Van Vechten had already shown the significance of the Negro in literature. The Negroes themselves began to prove the quality of their inheritance. Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* appeared, three collections of American Negro spirituals disclosed the melodic fertility of the black singers, and various collections of "blues" revealed how greatly contemporary American composers were indebted to the rude rhythms and sobbing saxophones of the dark musicians. Hughes was the first to express the spirit of these blues in words. In his note to his second volume, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), he writes, "The *Blues*, unlike the *Spirituals*, have a strict poetic pattern: one long line repeated and a third line to rhyme with the first two. Sometimes the second line in repetition is slightly changed and sometimes, but very seldom, it is omitted. The mood of the *Blues* is almost always despondency, but when they are sung people laugh."

Although at least half of Hughes' work centers about the blues, much of his poetry is grim in an essentially urban manner. His portraits of Negro workmen (as evidenced in the remarkable "Brass Spittoons" with its similarity in symbols to Anna Hempstead Branch's "The Monk in the Kitchen") are more memorable than those produced by any of his compatriots. Beneath the physical struggle one senses the more suffering spirit.

HOMESICK BLUES

De railroad bridge's
A sad song in de air.
De railroad bridge's
A sad song in de air.
Ever' time de trains pass
I wants to go somewhere.

I went down to de station;
Ma heart was in ma mouth.
Went down to de station;
Heart was in ma mouth.
Lookin' for a box car
To roll me to de South.

Homesick blues, Lawd,
'S a terrible thing to have.
Homesick blues is
A terrible thing to have.
To keep from cryin'
I opens ma mouth an' laughs.

BRASS SPITTOONS

Clean the spittoons, boy.
    Detroit,
    Chicago,
    Atlantic City,
    Palm Beach.
Clean the spittoons.
The steam in hotel kitchens,
And the smoke in hotel lobbies,
And the slime in hotel spittoons:
Part of my life.
    Hey, boy!
    A nickel,
    A dime,
    A dollar,
Two dollars a day.
    Hey, boy!

A nickel,
A dime,
A dollar,
Two dollars
Buys shoes for the baby.
House rent to pay.
Church on Sunday.
My God!

Babies and church
and women and Sunday
all mixed up with dimes and
dollars and clean spittoons
and house rent to pay.
Hey, boy!

A bright bowl of brass is beautiful to the Lord.
Bright polished brass like the cymbals
Of King David's dancers,
Like the wine cups of Solomon.
Hey, boy!
A clean spittoon on the altar of the Lord.
A clean bright spittoon all newly polished,—
At least I can offer that.
Com'mere, boy!

SATURDAY NIGHT

Play it once.
O, play it some more.
Charlie is a gambler
An' Sadie is a whore.
A glass o' whiskey
An' a glass o' gin:
Strut, Mr. Charlie,
Till de dawn comes in.
Pawn yo' gold watch
An' diamond ring.
Git a quart o' licker.
Let's shake dat thing!
Skee-de-dad! De-dad!

  Doo-doo-doo!
  Won't be nothin' left
  When de worms git through.
  An' you's a long time
  Dead
  When you is
  Dead, too.
So beat dat drum, boy!
Shout dat song:
Shake 'em up an' shake 'em up
All night long.
  Hey! Hey!
  Ho . . . Hum!
  Do it, Mr. Charlie,
  Till de red dawn come.

COUNTÉE CULLEN

Countée Cullen was born in New York City in 1903, the son of the Reverend Frederick A. Cullen. He was educated in the New York public and high schools and New York University, being graduated with the class of 1925. A year later he received his M.A. at Harvard (1926).

When *The Book of American Negro Poetry* was published in 1922, Cullen was still in his 'teens and his few verses were no more unusual than most youthful flights. Had the anthology been collected three years later, a selection from Cullen's work would have been one of its outstanding features. Beginning in 1924, poems by this hitherto unknown Negro began appearing in various magazines; within a year his name had reached the smallest of literary circles.

Color (1925) and *Copper Sun* (1927) suffer not only from the poet's influences but from his own juvenilia. But there is no gainsaying his gift of epigram and the neatness of his execution. Lacking the deep racial quality of Langston Hughes, his is a more literary accomplishment. If his verse is not as black as it might be painted, it is bold in concept and metaphor. "Heritage," which, in spite of reminiscences of Ralph Hodgson and Edna Millay, marks the peak of his first volume, still stands as one of the finest poems produced by an American Negro.

The Ballad of the Brown Girl (1927) appeared in the same year as his comprehensive anthology of Negro verse, *Caroling Dusk,* in which Cullen showed unexpected editorial acumen.

The Black Christ (1930) suffers from the double handicap of formula in style and formula in feeling. Its program is ambitious and promises force; but here is no fire, only fluency. The poet seems to be victimized by his own epithets, and these lack surprise or conviction. As Harry Alan Potamkin wrote, reviewing the preceding volume, "Mr. Cullen has capitalized the fact of race without paying for such capitalization by the exploitation of the material and the essence of race. Once race becomes to him more than capital and its poetic form more than the statement of its fact, he will create, upon what are undoubtedly unusual gifts, poems of import."

SIMON THE CYRENIAN SPEAKS

He never spoke a word to me,
And yet he called my name.
He never gave a sign to see,
And yet I knew and came.

At first I said, "I will not bear
His cross upon my back—
He only seeks to place it there
Because my skin is black."

But He was dying for a dream,
And He was very meek;
And in His eyes there shone a gleam
Men journey far to seek.

It was Himself my pity bought;
I did for Christ alone
What all of Rome could not have wrought
With bruise of lash or stone.

THREE EPITAPHS

For My Grandmother
This lovely flower fell to seed.
Work gently, sun and rain—
She held it as her dying creed
That she would grow again.

For a Virgin Lady

For forty years I shunned the lust
Inherent in my clay:
Death only was so amorous
I let him have his way.

A Lady I Know

She thinks that even up in heaven
Her class lies late and snores,
While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores.

HERITAGE

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

So I lie, who all day long
Want no sound except the song
Sung by wild barbaric birds
Goading massive jungle herds,
Juggernauts of flesh that pass
Trampling tall defiant grass
Where young forest lovers lie,
Plighting troth beneath the sky.
So I lie, who always hear,
Though I cram against my ear
Both my thumbs and keep them there,
Great drums throbbing through the air.
So I lie, whose fount of pride,
Dear distress, and joy allied,
Is my somber flesh and skin,
With the dark blood dammed within

Like great pulsing tides of wine
That, I fear, must burst the fine
Channels of the chafing net
Where they surge and foam and fret.

Africa? A book one thumbs
Listlessly, till slumber comes.
Unremembered are her bats
Circling through the night, her cats
Crouching in the river reeds,
Stalking gentle flesh that feeds
By the river brink; no more
Does the bugle-throated roar
Cry that monarch claws have leapt
From the scabbards where they slept.
Silver snakes that once a year
Doff the lovely coats you wear,
Seek no covert in your fear
Lest a mortal eye should see;
What's your nakedness to me?
Here no leprous flowers rear
Fierce corollas in the air;
Here no bodies sleek and wet,
Dripping mingled rain and sweat,
Tread the savage measures of
Jungle boys and girls in love.

What is last year's snow to me,
Last year's anything? The tree
Budding yearly must forget
How its past arose or set—
Bough and blossom, flower, fruit,
Even what shy bird with mute
Wonder at her travail there,
Meekly labored in its hair.
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

So I lie, who find no peace
Night or day, no slight release

From the unremittent beat
Made by cruel padded feet
Walking through my body's street.
Up and down they go, and back,
Treading out a jungle track.
So I lie, who never quite
Safely sleep from rain at night—
I can never rest at all
When the rain begins to fall;
Like a soul gone mad with pain
I must match its weird refrain;
Ever must I twist and squirm,
Writhing like a baited worm,
While its primal measures drip
Through my body, crying, "Strip!
Doff this new exuberance.
Come and dance the Lover's Dance!"
In an old remembered way
Rain works on me night and day.

Quaint, outlandish heathen gods
Black men fashion out of rods,
Clay and brittle bits of stone,
In a likeness of their own,
My conversion came high-priced;
I belong to Jesus Christ,
Preacher of humility;
Heathen gods are naught to me.
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
So I make an idle boast;
Jesus of the twice-turned cheek,
Lamb of God, although I speak
With my mouth thus, in my heart
Do I play a double part.
Even at Thy glowing altar
Must my heart grow sick and falter,
Wishing He I served were black,
Thinking then it would not lack
Precedent of pain to guide it,
Let who would or might deride it;

Surely then this flesh would know
Yours had borne a kindred woe
Lord. I fashion dark gods, too,
Daring even to give You
Dark despairing features where,
Crowned with dark rebellious hair,
Patience wavers just so much as
Mortal grief compels, while touches
Quick and hot, of anger, rise
To smitten cheek and weary eyes.
Lord, forgive me if my need
Sometimes shapes a human creed.

All day long and all night through,
One thing only must I do:
Quench my pride and cool my blood,
Lest I perish in the flood.
Lest a hidden ember set
Timber that I thought was wet
Burning like the dryest flax,
Melting like the merest wax,
Lest the grave restore its dead.
Not yet has my heart or head
In the least way realized
They and I are civilized.

ROBERTA TEALE SWARTZ

Roberta Teale Swartz was born in Brooklyn, New York, June 9, 1903. She began rhyming as a child, making up verses for her grandfather, who was her first poetic guide and critic. When Miss Swartz went to college, her gift was discovered while a sophomore. As an undergraduate, she won three of the most important prizes offered by various universities, Robert Frost and the present editor being two of the judges who selected her anonymous work from a score of others. Miss Swartz was graduated from Mount Holyoke with the class of 1925 and did post-graduate work at Radcliffe.

Miss Swartz's *Lilliput* (1926) is distinctly lyrical. Her occasional free verse has little charm beyond a certain quirk of intellect. This tricksy turn of thought is at its best in the more regular verses which are seldom without a half-defiant, half-questioning pucker. From this it should not be gathered that Miss

Swartz's Muse is merely light and flippant. There are grave accents throughout, but it is no spectacled seriousness with which she regards the world.

CHLOROPHYL

My mind is as the noise in fall
Of brittle leaves against a wall.
A thousand verdant thoughts that were
Try to repeat the summer stir
And cannot; when the wind shifts by
They shake and rattle, false and dry,
And have no music more at all,
Being but dead leaves on a wall.

O you alone, high, glistening,
Keep the warm lusters of the spring!
(Is there a frost I do not know
That shall take this from me also?)
Still, after every colder night
I find you laughing in the light,
The vine not utterly bereft—
This is the green place that is left.

VIRGINIA MOORE

Virginia Moore was born July 11, 1903, in Harvard, Nebraska. Her childhood was spent in the state of her birth, her girlhood in the South. She was educated at Hollins College, Virginia, from which she took her A.B. in 1922, and did post-graduate work at Columbia University, receiving her M.A. in 1923.

Not Poppy (1926) is a mixture of individuality and influences. The subjects are the author's own, but it is not difficult to trace an indebtedness to Browning, Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay and less significant contemporaries. Though *Not Poppy* relies too much on the manufactured phrase and the coddled epithet, it communicates an intensity and lyrical ease. *Sweet Water and Bitter* (1928) is a distinct advance. Not so mannered as its predecessor, its expression is more direct, its influences are less obvious. Miss Moore's verse is marked by contrasts rather than by coördination. The bright simplicity of "Winter Sunset" is set off by the dark fancy of "Underground Forest," yet both have roots spreading far into the unseen. There is nothing experimental about this work; Miss Moore disturbs no theory, disrupts no form. But in the best of her poems (notably in the sonnets of which "Take This for Comfort" is typical) there is a search—and sometimes an attainment—in quest of values which are more than technical.

Besides her poetry, Miss Moore has written, with Helen Ferris, a book of interviews, *Girls Who Did* (1927), and a novel, *Rising Wind* (1928).

WINTER SUNSET

Spring underfoot
Alas is dead,
But God has put
Spring overhead.

The field is plowed,
I smell the rose,
As cloud on cloud
The color goes

And in between
The east and west
A grassy green
Is manifest.

And now the hill
Is dark indeed
As vapors fill
The upper mead.

The twilight flows
Beyond the bank
Where shimmering does
So lately drank.

The water grieves,
The air is wet,
I search the leaves
For violet.

UNDERGROUND FOREST

You who love darkness, I have found a forest
Under the ground, and numberless and mute,
Where every massive trunk that plunders downward
Is blind in all its eyes, being a root,
And many seasons pass in sable splendor
Without a leaf, without a ripening fruit.

Here is a deadly twilight. Let no mortal
Be lost in lusterless regions and behold
As pale, as stygian as an evil conscience,
The stiffened-out inhabitants of mold,
Lest one of them should learn in gruesome manner
Why dew and all its counterparts are cold.

Never a bird . . . only a creeping stillness
As windless as the garments of a ghoul,
And nothing, nothing on its haunches howling
For very fear; and when the night is cool,
No stag approaching with majestic headgear
To drink the jeweled waters of the pool.

If it were possible, the downward forest
Would clamber for its own, the souls that brood;
The darkling mole, secure within his mansion,
Precedes—the rest would follow if they could:
Lovers distraught would gather there, bemoaning,
With arms upheld in frozen attitude.

"TAKE THIS FOR COMFORT"

Take this for comfort, desperate of heart,
Use it for ointment on the wounds you bear;
There never was a mortal set apart
From the destiny of grief that mortals share.
But grief is doled only to be redeemed
On the brown breast of nature, rich with wreck:
The claims of earth are desperations dreamed,
Mortality the stone about your neck.

Here is a pillow fit for any mood,
Hard with affection, fringed with kindly grass;
No man can give you this effacing good
Though he be precious as the years that pass. . . .
Birds come, winds come, and women asking rest—
There is no breast to ease you like this breast.

MERRILL MOORE

Merrill Moore was born in Columbia, Tennessee, September 11, 1903. Although he served an interneship in Boston, his backgrounds are entirely Southern: his father, John Trotwood Moore, the historian, was from Alabama; his mother from Missouri. He was educated in Nashville, receiving his B.A. at Vandberbilt University in 1924, his M.D. in 1928, and he was one of the group which made *The Fugitive* so provocative a periodical.

His work is vividly modern and it seems, at first glance, a paradox that this experimental poet has chosen the most classic form as his medium. Typography and tradition notwithstanding, *The Noise That Time Makes* (1929) is composed entirely of sonnets—and it is an open secret that Merrill Moore at the age of twenty-five had composed no less than two thousand such sonnets. Nor is it a fiction that Moore learned shorthand in order to get more of his fourteen-liners done between classroom and laboratory. It should be said that neither Wyatt nor Philip Sidney would have sponsored had they even recognized Moore's employment of the key with which Shakespeare unlocked his art. *The Noise That Time Makes* bears the first fruits of what might be considered a new hybrid: the American sonnet.

The characterization is not far-fetched, for Moore's cis-Atlantic accent, the native syncopated speed—so different from English and Italian tempi—the abrupt approach and swift abandonment are not only occasioned by local backgrounds but are the very essence of these poems. As a sonneteer in the strict sense, Moore commits every known heresy and invents several new ones. His rhyme-schemes seem as haphazard as they are numerous—the rhymes themselves are suspiciously unorthodox. His lines, instead of conforming to a precise meter, stretch themselves flexibly as their author throws in four or five extra syllables with prodigal nonchalance. His stanzas, instead of splitting neatly into customary octave and sestet, divide themselves anywhere with what seems sheer perversity. But there is nothing arbitrary about these "American sonnets." The innovations are essentially reasonable, and the reasons for them are quite simple. Merrill Moore's sonnets are, in some ways, the most spontaneous ever written in America, and their "naturalness" is reflected in their structure. The rhythms are based on the rise and fall of the breath rather than on the beat of the metronome. It is not scansion but stress which determines the line-length. The ideas in each sonnet—the shift of emphasis, the coupling of rhymes, the internal appositions—are responsible for the strange but always logical departures in spacing. Sometimes the author adds a title which, included in the rhyme-scheme, is actually a part of the poem (*vide* "Old Men and Old Women Going Home on the Street Car" or "Helen Told Me What Was in Her Head"), and so calmly manufactures a fifteen-line sonnet.

The charm of such poetry is the continual freshness, which gives it the quality of improvisation. This is, likewise, a danger; for when Moore, seated before his instrument, lets his fingers wander as they list, his spontaneous playing extends itself into a fluency which is neither a virtue nor virtuosity. But the best of his lines reveal the serious eye and sensitive touch. "What if small birds are peppering the sky," "allowing fish-like thoughts to escape in thin streams trickling through the mind," "birds indeclinable twitter"—the sonnets are full of such swift exactitudes. Suiting their pace to subjects limited only by a seemingly unlimited imagination, scarcely two of these poems are alike in shape or theme. "Shot Who? Jim Lane!" is as realistic as it is sectional; "Warning to One" is a tribute etched with acid; "How She Resolved to Act" is intuitive as it is whimsical; "The Book of How" quietly mingles the casual and the colossal. *The Noise That Time Makes* presents, with kaleidoscopic change, no sequence but a series of unrelated patterns impacting on each other. This, obviously, is a poetry not of association but disassociation; it is explosive not integrative. But it has its own positive quality. Merrill Moore derives from no one; he has that "tone of voice" which is the personal and unmistakable property of the poet.

OLD MEN AND OLD WOMEN GOING HOME ON THE STREET CAR

Carrying their packages of groceries in particular
With books under their arms that maybe they will read
And possibly understand, old women lead
Their weaker selves up to the front of the car.

And old men who for thirty years have sat at desks
Survey them harmlessly.
                                        They regard each other
As forgotten sister looks at forgotten brother

On their way between two easily remembered tasks
And that is positively all there is to it.

But it was not that way thirty years ago!
Before desks and counters had tired their backs and feet,

When life for them was a bowl of odorous fruit
That they might take their pick of, then turn and go
Saying, "This tastes so good!" or, "This smells so sweet!"

IT IS WINTER, I KNOW

What if small birds are peppering the sky,
Scudding south with the clouds to an ultimate tip on lands
Where they may peck worms and slugs from moist sands
Rather muddily mixed with salt?
                                        Or if wind dashes by
Insufferably filled with birds' indeclinable twitter
Not deigning to toy with the oak-twigs that it passes
And treading but lightly on all the delicate grasses
Under trees where crickets are silent, where mad leaves flutter?

It is winter, I know, there are too many Nays now confronting
The obdurate soul that would trick itself into believing
That buds are still ripe, that cells are all ready for cleaving;
It can only be winter, winter alone, when blunting
Winds rush over the ice, scattering leaves from their weeds
To rattle the sycamore tree's dry-shriveled seeds.

SHOT WHO? JIM LANE!

When he was shot he toppled to the ground
As if the toughened posts that were his thighs
Had felt that all that held them up were lies,
Weak lies, that suddenly some one had found
Out all that was true about them.
                                        It did not seem
Like the crashing of a stalwart forest oak
But like a frail staff that a sharp wind broke
Or something insubstantial in a dream.

I never thought Jim Lane would fall like that.

He'd sworn that bullets must be gold to find him;
That when they came toward him he made them mind him
By means he knew,
just as a barn-yard cat
Can keep a pack of leaping dogs at bay
By concentrating and looking a certain way.

WARNING TO ONE

Death is the strongest of all living things
And when it happens do not look in the eyes
For a dead fire or a lack-luster there,
But listen for the words that fall from lips
Or do not fall. Silence is not death;
It merely means that the one who is conserving breath
Is not concerned with tattle and small quips.

Watch the quick fingers and the way they move
During unguarded moments—words of love
And love's caresses may be cold as ice
And cold the glitter of engagement rings;
Death is the sword that hangs on a single hair,
And that thin tenuous hair is no more than love
And yours is the silly head it hangs above.

HOW SHE RESOLVED TO ACT

"I shall be careful to say nothing at all
About myself or what I know of him
Or the vaguest thought I have—no matter how dim,
Tonight if it so happen that he call."

And not ten minutes later the door-bell rang
And into the hall he stepped as he always did
With a face and a bearing that quite poorly hid
His brain that burned and his heart that fairly sang
And his tongue that wanted to be rid of the truth.

As well as she could, for she was very loath
To signify how she felt, she kept very still,
But soon her heart cracked loud as a coffee mill

And her brain swung like a comet in the dark
And her tongue raced like a squirrel in the park.

PANDORA AND THE MOON

Minds awake in bodies that were asleep
Caused the winged troubles to be born
That made Pandora one time feel forlorn,

Because, in spite of the box, she could not keep
Her troubles there, the worrisome animalcules
Fluttered out never to be regained,
For every method of evil especially trained
And subject neither to God's nor the devil's rules.

What shall she do? Nothing; sit and ponder,
Watch the dying leaves drop from the tree
Until they all are gone and she may see
The same moon then that used to make her wonder
At the unbelievable stories she sits and reads.

And if she succeeds in that then she succeeds.

VILLAGE NOON: MID-DAY BELLS

When both hands of the town clock stood at twelve
Eve ceased spinning, Adam ceased to delve.

A lusty cockerel crowed that noon had come,
The shadows stood beneath the trees and some
Were motionless a moment—then the people
Busied themselves for food, and in the steeple
Ubiquitous pigeons roucoulayed and slept
Above the watch the dogs below them kept
For nothing—or a dust cloud down the road
That might mean feet or might mean wheels or not.

Then as the noon sun with its ardor glowed
On man and beast and field and dwelling place
The hands moved past noon to another spot
And Time moved on a little way in Space.

THE BOOK OF HOW

After the stars were all hung separately out
For mortal eyes to see that care to look
The one who did it sat down and wrote a book
On how he did it.
It took him about
As long to write the book as to do the deed
But he said, "It's things like this we mostly need."
And the angels approved but the devils screamed with laughter
For they knew exactly what would follow after.

For somehow he managed entirely to omit
The most important facts in accomplishing it,

Where he got the ladder to reach the stars
And how he lighted them, especially Mars,

And what he hung them on when he got them there
Eternally distant and luminous in the air.

AND TO THE YOUNG MEN

And to the young men awaiting their sacrifice
You brought water in an invisible pail
And promised them the plans would surely fail
That were written against them, recorded in the stars.
And you brought straw and padded the cold bars
Of the prison beds whereon the young men lay,
And sung to some at night and fanned by day
Those who were fevering into paradise.

But even then you did not do enough.
For you remember a boy, the silent one?
With a silent eye, who scarcely loved the sun,
And felt too keenly the winter wind's dry sough?
Well, you should have brought him cresses from a far stream
Over which nymphs and under which naiads dream.

Robert Penn Warren was born in Kentucky in 1905. His education was widely scattered: he received his B.A. at Vanderbilt University and his M.A. at the University of California. He attended Yale Graduate School for a time and, in 1929, New College, at Oxford, reading English literature. He was the youngest of *The Fugitive* group, sharing their sectional differences, though less pronouncedly local than most.

John Brown (1929) is a biography in prose, differing radically in tone and treatment from Benét's *John Brown's Body*. Warren's poetry is more certain; it has iron beneath its grace. Intellectual in its origins, Warren's verse remains closer to his locale than the work of his confrères; fertile in strong images, its strength no less than its fecundity rises from Kentucky soil. The critical mind is always at work here, but not so insistently as to inhibit the creative imagination. In his early twenties, Warren has already accomplished a fusion: in his lime-tinctured phrases, form and feeling are one.

Pondy Woods and Other Poems (1930) is a first volume of verse which expresses the quiet patriot and confirms the poet.

PONDY WOODS

The buzzards over Pondy Woods
Achieve the blue tense altitudes,
Black figments that the woods release,
Obscenity in form and grace,
Drifting high through the pure sunshine
Till the sun in gold decline.

Big Jim Todd was a slick black buck
Laying low in the mud and muck
Of Pondy Woods when the sun went down
In gold, and the buzzards tilted down
A windless vortex to the black-gum trees
To sit along the quiet boughs,
Devout and swollen, at their ease.

By the buzzard roost Big Jim Todd
Listened for hoofs on the corduroy road
Or for the foul and sucking sound
A man's foot makes on the marshy ground.

Past midnight, when the moccasin
Slipped from the log and, trailing in
Its obscured waters, broke
The dark algae, one lean bird spoke.

"Nigger, you went this afternoon
For your Saturday spree at the Blue Goose saloon,
So you've got on your Sunday clothes,
On your big splay feet got patent-leather shoes.
But a buzzard can smell the thing you've done;
The posse will get you—run, nigger, run—
There's a fellow behind you with a big shot-gun.
Nigger, nigger, you'll sweat cold sweat
In your patent-leather shoes and Sunday clothes
When down your track the steeljacket goes
Mean and whimpering over the wheat.

"Nigger, your breed ain't metaphysical."
The buzzard coughed. His words fell
In the darkness, mystic and ambrosial.
"But we maintain our ancient rite,
Eat gods by day and prophesy by night.
We swing against the sky and wait;
You seize the hour, more passionate
Than strong, and strive with time to die—
With Time, the beaked tribe's astute ally.

"The Jew-boy died. The Syrian vulture swung
Remotely above the cross whereon he hung
From dinner-time to supper-time, and all
The people gathered there watched him until
The lean brown chest no longer stirred,
Then idly watched the slow majestic bird
That in the last sun above the twilit hill
Gleamed for a moment at the height and slid
Down the hot wind and in the darkness hid.
Nigger, regard the circumstance of breath:
'Non omnis moriar,' the poet saith."

Pedantic, the bird clacked its gray beak,
With a Tennessee accent to the classic phrase;
Jim understood, and was about to speak,
But the buzzard drooped one wing and filmed the eyes.

At dawn unto the Sabbath wheat he came,
That gave to the dew its faithless yellow flame
From kindly loam in recollection of
The fires that in the brutal rock once strove.
To the ripe wheat fields he came at dawn.
Northward the printed smoke stood quiet above
The distant cabins of Squiggtown.
A train's far whistle blew and drifted away
Coldly; lucid and thin the morning lay
Along the farms, and here no sound
Touched the sweet earth miraculously stilled.
Then down the damp and sudden wood there belled
The musical white-throated hound.

In Pondy Woods in the August drouth
Lurks fever and the cottonmouth.
And buzzards over Pondy Woods
Achieve the blue tense altitudes,
Drifting high in the pure sunshine
Till the sun in gold decline;
Then golden and hieratic through
The night their eyes burn two by two.

PRO SUA VITA

Nine months I waited in the dark beneath
Her tired heart for this precious breath,

And month by month since I left her breast
Her breath and blood I have given in waste,

Till now at length some peace she has got
That her breath and blood in me have not.

In the strictured nights of glimmering snow
The blood drives quick though breath is slow,

And through the August afternoon
Flees the breath faintly but too soon.

So blood is lost to the brutal gardens
Where the iron petal of dark frost hardens,

And breath, when the storm-black trees bowed under,
Waited the fanged astounding thunder.

Shall I say to my father then
Among the belted best of men:

"Fellow, you tupped her years ago
That tonight my boots might crunch the snow.

"And woman, you show your son to wait
Till the breath and distraught blood abate;

"As my father began the tale of waste
When the sullen head slept on your breast,

"So the rigid hills had been forgot
In darkness, if God had wasted not."

LETTER OF A MOTHER

Under the green lamp-light her letter there
Lies among cluttered papers, rusted pens,
Books and handkerchiefs, tobacco tins.
Shuffle of feet ascends the darkened stair.

The son, defined upon the superscription,
Inherits now his cubicled domain,
And reads. Indeed, should he possess again
The loneliness of time's slow mitigation?

Or spell the name, which is himself, and say:
"By now this woman's milk is out of me.
I have a debt of flesh, assuredly,
Which score the mintage of the breath might pay. . . .

"A certain weight of cunning flesh devised
So hunger is bred in the bitter bone
To cleave about this precious skeleton
Held mortmain of her womb and merchandised

"Unto the dark: a subtile engine, propped
In the sutured head beneath the coronal seam,
Whose illegal prodigality of dream
In shaking the escheat heart is quick estopped.

"Such is the substance of this legacy:
A fragile vision fed of acrid blood,
Whose sweet process may bloom in gratitude
For the worthier gift of her mortality."

But still the flesh cries out unto the black
Void, across the plains insistently
Where rivers wash their wastage to the sea. . . .
The mother flesh that cannot summon back

The tired child it would again possess
As shall a womb more tender than her own
That builds not tissue or the little bone,
But dissolves them to itself in weariness.

HISTORY AMONG THE ROCKS

(*From "Kentucky Mountain Farm"*)

There are many ways to die
Here among the rocks in any weather:
Wind, down the eastern gap, will lie
Level along the snow, beating the cedar,
And lull the drowsy head that it blows over
To startle a crystalline, cold dream forever.

The hound's black paw will print the grass in May,
And sycamores rise down a dark ravine,
Where a creek in flood, sucking the rock and clay,
Will tumble the sycamore, the laurel, away.
Think how a body, naked and lean
And white as the splintered sycamore, would go
Tumbling and turning, hushed in the end,
With hair afloat in waters that gently bend
To ocean where the blind tides flow.

Under the shadow of ripe wheat,
By flat limestone, will coil the copperhead,
Fanged as the sunlight, hearing the reaper's feet.
But there are other ways, the lean men said:
In these autumn orchards once young men lay dead—
Gray coats, blue coats. Young men on the mountainside

Clambered, fought. Heels muddied the rocky spring.
Their reason is hard to guess, remembering
Blood on their black mustaches in moonlight,
Cold musket-barrels glittering with frost.
Their reason is hard to guess and a long time past;
The apple falls, falling in the quiet night.

GEORGE DILLON

George Dillon was born November 12, 1906, in Jacksonville, Florida, and spent most of his childhood in Kentucky, his mother's region. He went to school in the Middle West and was graduated from the University of Chicago in 1927.

While still an undergraduate, his verses began to attract attention beyond the borders of Illinois; he was made president of the Poetry Club of his University, and in 1925 was given the John Billings Fiske Prize as well as the Young Poet's Prize awarded by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. In the same year he joined the *Poetry* staff as Associate Editor.

Boy in the Wind (1927) is distinguished by much more than precocity; always musical, there is an edge to these water-color contours. Dillon is essentially a lyricist of half-tones, but he puts suavity to measures firm in outline.

The Flowering Stone, Dillon's second volume, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. Here the poetry is less insistently dulcet. Maturity begins to underline his soft lights with shadows. But Dillon does not fall into a poeticized "daybreak of anguish"; he still declares for "the noble wave, the affluent wind." His is an early but pronounced gift of song.

IN TWO MONTHS NOW

In two months now or maybe one
The sun will be a different sun
And earth that stretches white as straw
With stony ice will crack and thaw
And run in whistling streams and curve
In still blue-shadowed pools. The nerve
Of each pink root will quiver bare
And orchards in the April air
Will show black branches breaking white.
Red roses in the green twilight

Will glimmer ghostly blue and swell
Upon their vines with such a smell
As only floats when the breeze is loud
At dusk from roses in a crowd.
I know that there will be these things
Remembering them from other springs.
All these and more shall soon be seen,
As beautiful as they have been;
But not so beautiful as they
Seem now to be, a month away.

BOY IN THE WIND

How came this troubled one to stray
With fire and song in the wind's way?

Indifferent and dumb and sweet,
The seasons fall about his feet.

Frail flames are set behind his eyes,
And under his ribs his heart makes moan
Like a pent bird who throbs and dies.

He walks in the windy night alone.

And who would know if he should sing
Whose song is less than the murmuring
Of the wind full of the ruin of spring?

And who could say if he had flown
Like a flame blown out or a bird up-blown?

Or if his heart cries out in pain
Who hears the cry through wind and rain?

He wanders east. He wanders west.

Where will he ever come to rest,
With that fire blowing in his brain,
And that bird grieving in his breast?

APRIL'S AMAZING MEANING

April's amazing meaning doubtless lies
In tall hoarse boys and slips
Of slender girls with suddenly wider eyes
And parted lips;

For girls will wander pensive in the spring
When the green rain is over,
Doing some slow, inconsequential thing,
Plucking clover;

And any boy alone upon a bench
When his work's done will sit
And stare at the black ground and break a branch
And whittle it

Slowly; and boys and girls, irresolute,
Will curse the dreamy weather
Until they meet past the pale hedge and put
Their lips together.

MEMORY OF LAKE SUPERIOR

I know a country of bright anonymous beaches
Where the sand may sleep unprinted till it is stone.
Granite grows loud among the hills and ditches
Of the blown water when the water is blown.

Up on the mountain the sky is everywhere,
The lake fallen hugely underfoot as if
Into the bottom of a well of air,
The island upon it little as a leaf.

The woods are dark with the rank lace of hemlock and pine,
Beech, birch, and balsam, and the shadow of these.
There are mushrooms, and thimbleberries sweeter than wine,
And a far noise of wind in the tops of the trees.

That country was all the knowledge I shall ever learn;
It was all the wisdom I shall ever have.
It was there I looked for the driftwood boughs that burn
In colors like the memory of a wave.

It was there I looked along the forest floor
For the gray feather of the grouse's wing.
It was there I learned to look for nothing more,
Looking into the sea-blue eyes of spring.

ONE BEAUTY STILL

One beauty still is faultless, not
Deflowered in the bed of thought:
It is a sound of sunken seas.
It is an avid wish for ease.
It is the earth, it is the sky
When passion is a lute put by,
And life a dancer out of breath.
It is the lovely face of death,
Adored and guessed at—never once
Beheld in chrysoprase or bronze;
Not in the temple or the grove,
Not in a hundred nights of love.

This was the morning sun, the wild
Daybreak of anguish in the child.
This is the sun at noon no less,
Deep in the dome of nothingness.
Wherefore, impoverished heart, be proud
To wear the purple of the shroud:
If you are friendless, take for friend
The noble wave, the affluent wind.
If you are homeless, do not care:
Inhabit the bright house of air.
If you are worn with wayfaring,
Lie down within the arms of spring.

HILDA CONKLING

Hilda Conkling was born at Catskill-on-Hudson, New York, October 8, 1910. The daughter of Grace Hazard Conkling (see page 311), she came to Northampton, Massachusetts, with her mother when she was three years old and has lived there since.

Hilda began to write poems—or rather, to talk them—at the age of four. She has created more than two hundred little verses, many of them astonishing in exactness of phrase. Hilda "told" her poems, and her mother copied them down, arranged the line-divisions and read it to the child for correction. Conceding a half-conscious shaping by Mrs. Conkling, the quality which shines behind all of Hilda's facets of loveliness is a straightforward ingeniousness, a child-like but extraordinary fantasy.

Poems by a Little Girl (1920), published when Hilda was a little more than nine years old, is proof of this. Every poem bears its stamp of unaffected originality; "Water," "Hay-Cock," and a dozen others are startling in their precision and power of painting the familiar in unsuspected colors. This child not only sees, feels and hears with the concentration of a child-artist, she communicates the results of her perceptions with the sensitivity of an expert craftsman. She hears a chickadee talking

The way smooth bright pebbles
Drop into water.

Everything is vivid and sharply correct to her keen sight. The rooster's comb is "gay as a parade"; he has "pearl trinkets on his feet" and

The short feathers smooth along his back
Are the dark color of wet rocks,
Or the rippled green of ships
When I look at their sides through water.

Shoes of the Wind (1922) shows that her first volume was no mere *Wunderkind's* freak. Here again her vision is precise even when her imagination is most playful. She watches pigeons with "feet the color of new June strawberries," she observes a pink peony standing in a tall glass as "Queen Elizabeth in a ruff," lilies-of-the-valley are "bell-shaped moments clustered, doves of time." This clarity of epithet makes Hilda kin to the Imagists; Amy Lowell might have described a flight of pigeons in just such words as Hilda's: "A cool curving and sliding down the light."

WATER

The world turns softly
Not to spill its lakes and rivers.
The water is held in its arms
And the sky is held in the water.
What is water,
That pours silver,
And can hold the sky?

HAY-COCK

This is another kind of sweetness
Shaped like a bee-hive:
This is the hive the bees have left,
It is from this clover-heap
They took away the honey
For the other hive!

THE OLD BRIDGE

The old bridge has a wrinkled face.
He bends his back
For us to go over.
He moans and weeps
But we do not hear.
Sorrow stands in his face
For the heavy weight and worry
Of people passing.
The trees drop their leaves into the water;
The sky nods to him.
The leaves float down like small ships
On the blue surface
Which is the sky.
He is not always sad:
He smiles to see the ships go down
And the little children
Playing on the river banks.

I KEEP WONDERING

I saw a mountain,
And he was like Wotan looking at himself in the water.
I saw a cockatoo,
And he was like sunset clouds.
Even leaves and little stones
Are different to my eyes sometimes.
I keep wondering through and through my heart
Where all the beautiful things in the world
Come from.
And while I wonder
They go on being beautiful.

Nathalia Clara Ruth Crane, the most remarkable phenomenon since the days of Marjorie Fleming, was born in New York City August 11, 1913. Through her father she is descended from John and Priscilla Alden, Stephen Crane being a not distant kinsman; on her mother's side she inherits the varied gifts of the Abarbanels, that famous family of Spanish Jews which counts among its members poets, musicians and ministers of state.

Nathalia began to write when she was little more than eight years old. At the age of nine she sent some of her verses to *The New York Sun* and they were accepted wholly on their merit by Edmund Leamy, the poetry editor, Leamy having no idea that the lines were written by a child. Other verses of Nathalia's appeared in *The Sun* and it was not until a call in answer to a letter disclosed to Leamy's amazement that the writer was none other than a slender, candid and not at all self-conscious child.

Nathalia's first volume, *The Janitor's Boy*, appeared when its author was ten and a half, in 1924. It went rapidly through six editions, being one of the most discussed publications of the year. Some of the critics explained the work by insisting that the child was some sort of medium, an instrument unaware of what was played upon it; others, considering the book a hoax, scorned the fact that any child could have written verses so smooth in execution and so remarkable in spiritual overtones. Whatever the source may be, whether the inspiration derives from Nathalia's father or some atavistic spark, the poetry speaks for itself, a firm and definite accomplishment.

The verse is sharply divided into two kinds: the light and childish jingle—the sort of thinking native to most children but which most of them are unable to compress into such facile rhyme—and the grave and cryptic poetry. Even in the first division there is a quality unusual to child verse; in such merry stanzas as "The Flathouse Roof," "Love," "Oh, Roger Jones" there is a sophistication which lifts them above many of Eugene Field's rhymes on similar themes. The turn of epigram is never lacking; even in her pattering syllables she speaks of "the tenseness of humiliating pain"; a visit to an ice-cream store leads her to conclude that she "could not stain romance with monetary fee"; an emotion suspiciously like humor leads her to write "The First Reformer" and to begin another poem:

> I linger on the flathouse roof, the moonlight is divine,
> But my heart is all a-flutter like the washing on the line.

The other division of Nathalia's work, which is no longer verse but indubitable poetry, reveals the fact that Nathalia has read much not only in books of legends but in the dictionary. This juvenile mystic is as fond of archaic terms as Francis Thompson (she collects unusual words as other children postage stamps) and she enjoys using a string of glistening alliterations to express some psychic fact. But the fact rises from its foundations on an imaginative sweep which any poet might envy. The thought of heavenly spirits hankering for the world they have left assumes this form:

A precious place is Paradise and none may know its worth,
But Eden ever longeth for the knicknacks of the earth.

The angels grow quite wistful over worldly things below;
They hear the hurdy-gurdies in the Candle Maker's Row.

They listen for the laughter from the attics of the earth;
They lower pails from heaven's wall to catch the milkmaid's mirth.

Figures startling as the last one abound in Nathalia's pages. She summons "birth-marked butterflies cruising across the mirrors of the skies"; she sends the humming-bird "pivoting on emptiness"; her *alter ego* in Gobi sees "the tombs Time left unlatched" and "wind-blown shrouds of sand"; she imagines Oriental bees sailing "in golden convoys to the mountains of the moon." She writes a poem to console a blind playmate to whom she has tried to picture the wonder of a Christmas tree. But the lines which result have little to do with the child and nothing with the actual event; what follows is a piece of musical philosophy in which the insight is nothing less than uncanny. "The Vestal" and "Destiny" are illuminations which would not be out of place in a volume of Emily Dickinson. It is a younger feminine Swinburne who speaks in "The Gossips." And from what origin sprang that curiously involved but amazing monologue, "My Husbands," with its occult divination:

He showed me like a master
  That one rose makes a gown;
That looking up to Heaven
  Is merely looking down.

Other volumes followed in incredibly swift succession. *Lava Lane* (1925), *The Singing Crow* (1926), *Venus Invisible* (1928), three volumes of poetry much more sedate than her first book. Prose paralleled her verse almost as swiftly: *The Sunken Garden* (1926) showed her rather pompous genius in a long alliterative account of the Children's Crusade; *An Alien from Heaven* (1929) is a novel on a still more unusual theme in which the symbolism is seemingly autobiographical if suspiciously mature and even dry in tone.

Venus Invisible is the most rewarding of these "later" volumes. It continues her eccentric vocabulary which, though less weird than before, is still more than strange, and a journalistic tendency that causes her to fashion lyrics out of a current fad in psychology or an item in a newspaper. Thus the achievement of Lindbergh—celebrated in "The Wings of Lead," which won first prize in a contest for versifying the flight across the Atlantic—brings in Homer, David, Richard, Joan, Ephesian Diana, Indra, "the stony wings of Egypt," "the tambourine of Miriam." To her defects one might add Nathalia's dependence on roses were it not that some of her finest verse uplifts the flower-cliché. Such an unaccountably metaphysical poem as the "Song" beginning "Great is the rose" passes beyond criticism. One ceases to question whether the author is a conscious child or an influenced medium; one forgets who may have written the phrases and listens only to the long implication which "challenges the crypt, and quotes millenniums against the grave." "The Dust" reiterates the theme; condensations like "The Colors," and "Desire," with its recognition of the province of poetry, are distilled communications. They reach beyond cavil or controversy. The appeal of such lines is not that they have been written by a child but by a poet.

THE BLIND GIRL

In the darkness, who would answer for the color of a rose,
Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage it goes.

In the darkness who would answer, in the darkness who would
    care,
If the odor of the roses and the wingèd things were there.

In the darkness who would cavil o'er the question of a line,
Since the darkness holds all loveliness beyond the mere design.

Oh, night, thy soothing prophecies companion all our ways,
Until releasing hands let fall the catalogue of days.

In the darkness, who would answer for the color of a rose,
Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage it goes?

In the darkness who would answer, in the darkness who would
    care,
If the odor of the roses and the wingèd things were there.

THE VESTAL

Once a pallid vestal
Doubted truth in blue;
Listed red as ruin,
Harried every hue;

Barricaded vision,
Garbed herself in sighs;
Ridiculed the birth marks
Of the butterflies.

Dormant and disdainful,
Never could she see
Why the golden powder
Decorates the bee;

Why a summer pasture
Lends itself to paint;
Why love unappareled
Still remains the saint.

Finally she faltered;
Saw at last, forsooth,
Every gaudy color
Is a bit of truth.

Then the gates were opened;
Miracles were seen;
That instructed damsel
Donned a gown of green;

Wore it in a churchyard,
All arrayed with care;
And a painted rainbow
Shone above her there.

THE GOSSIPS

The rosebud that grew by the settle
Bowed low to the gossiping thrusts;
The poet was praising the nettle,
The nettle that nobody trusts.

The pansies were painted in postures,
The poppies have stood on their toes;
But long before mention of Moses
Her rivals have flouted the rose.

Oh! Sweetness a-sway by the settle,
Be still on thy beautiful stem;
For love never clung to the nettle—
The nettle that burns to condemn.

Grieve not for a moment's defection,
Though pansies and poppies may pose,
For after a bit of reflection
The rover returns to the rose.

THE FIRST REFORMER

It was a primal twilight tense,
Heat swathed the steaming downs,
And suddenly a flower cried:
"Oh, let's take off our gowns."

No arrogance of modesty—
The time was all too hot;
The sap was pouring from the trees,
The pools began to clot;

A passionate poinsettia stripped
Herself of sarcenet green,
A lily shook her sindon off,
A rose her gabardine.

The honeysuckle cast her sheath,
Strove hard to hide a mole,
The poppy ripped her chemisette
And screamed: "I have a soul!"

Across the downs a humming bird
Came dipping through the bowers;
He pivoted on emptiness
To scrutinize the flowers.

But as he paused to clarify
Amazing visionings,
The perfumes drew him down unto
The loveliest of things.

Bewildered, the poinsettia blushed
And grabbed a bit of grass;
The honeysuckle held her breath,
The poppy sighed, "Alas."

The roses called him renegade,
The lilies shut their eyes.
Down rushed that ruby-throated wretch—
A sultan from the skies.

He wooed the daunted odalisques,
He kissed each downcast nude;
He whispered that an angel's robe
Is mostly attitude;

He sang of love's own liveries,
Of sunburn, tan and verve,
Of little Nordic freckles posed
To punctuate a curve;

He begged them not to gown again,
Caressed away their shame;
He was the first reformer crowned
With accidental fame.

THE THREE-CORNERED LOT

Said the farmer to his daughter: "When I die, as like as not,
I'll leave to you the title to the old three-cornered lot.

" 'Tis the vale beyond the pastures, never any good to me,
With the huckleberry bushes and the silver maple-tree.

"Fair scenery for song birds, but too small to cultivate;
Yet there's a wall around it, like a foolish man's estate."

Fell a blight upon the corn fields; stood an empty barn and cot;
The farmer's holdings dwindled to the old three-cornered lot.

He saw his home dismantled; learned that permanence, alas,
Is the portrait of a swallow painted on the shadow grass.

Came his daughter as a seeress, and she said, "As like as not,
I am giving back the title to the old three-cornered lot.

" 'Tis just a bit of scenery too sweet to cultivate,
Yet there's a wall around it, like a nobleman's estate;

"There are huckleberry bushes and a length of garden loam,
And stone walls of the foolish man wherewith to build a home."

DESTINY

The wind doth wander up and down,
Forever seeking for a crown;
The rose, in stillness on a stem,
Inherits love's own diadem.

THE DUST

Crumpling a pyramid, humbling a rose,
The dust has its reasons wherever it goes.

Treating the sword blade the same as the staff,
Turning the chariot wheel into chaff.

Toppling a pillar and nudging a wall,
Building a sand pile to counter each fall.

Yielding to nothing, not even the rose,
The dust has its reasons wherever it goes.

THE COLORS

You cannot choose your battlefield,
The gods do that for you,
But you can plant a standard
Where a standard never flew.

ALLIANCES

The little *and,* the tiny *if,*
The ardent *ahs* and *ohs,*
They haunt the lanes of poesy,
The boulevards of prose.

Small primpers of the passages
With very slender limbs—
And yet they make alliances
With lordly paradigms.

DESIRE

Oh, I would like to be a ghoul
And ruffle the poet's mound,
To dig up the rhymes he laid aside
For the sake of another sound.

And otherwise, if that were vain,
A diver I would be,
To pick up the rings the doges dropped
Whenever they married the sea.

SONG

(*From "Tadmor"*)

Great is the rose
Infected by the tomb,
Yet burgeoning
Indifferent to death.

Wherein the dawn
Did stumble to fulfill,
The rose has told
In one simplicity

That never life
Relinquishes a bloom
But to bestow
An ancient confidence.

Great is the rose
That challenges the crypt,
And quotes millenniums
Against the grave.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following volumes deal, in considerable detail, with many of the poets, groups and tendencies considered in this collection. A few treat principally of an earlier period; the majority, however, reflect the shifting course of contemporary poetry. Most of them contain liberal quotations, references, and suggestions for supplementary reading.

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